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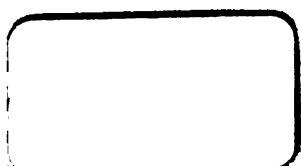
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# THE RISING GENERATION



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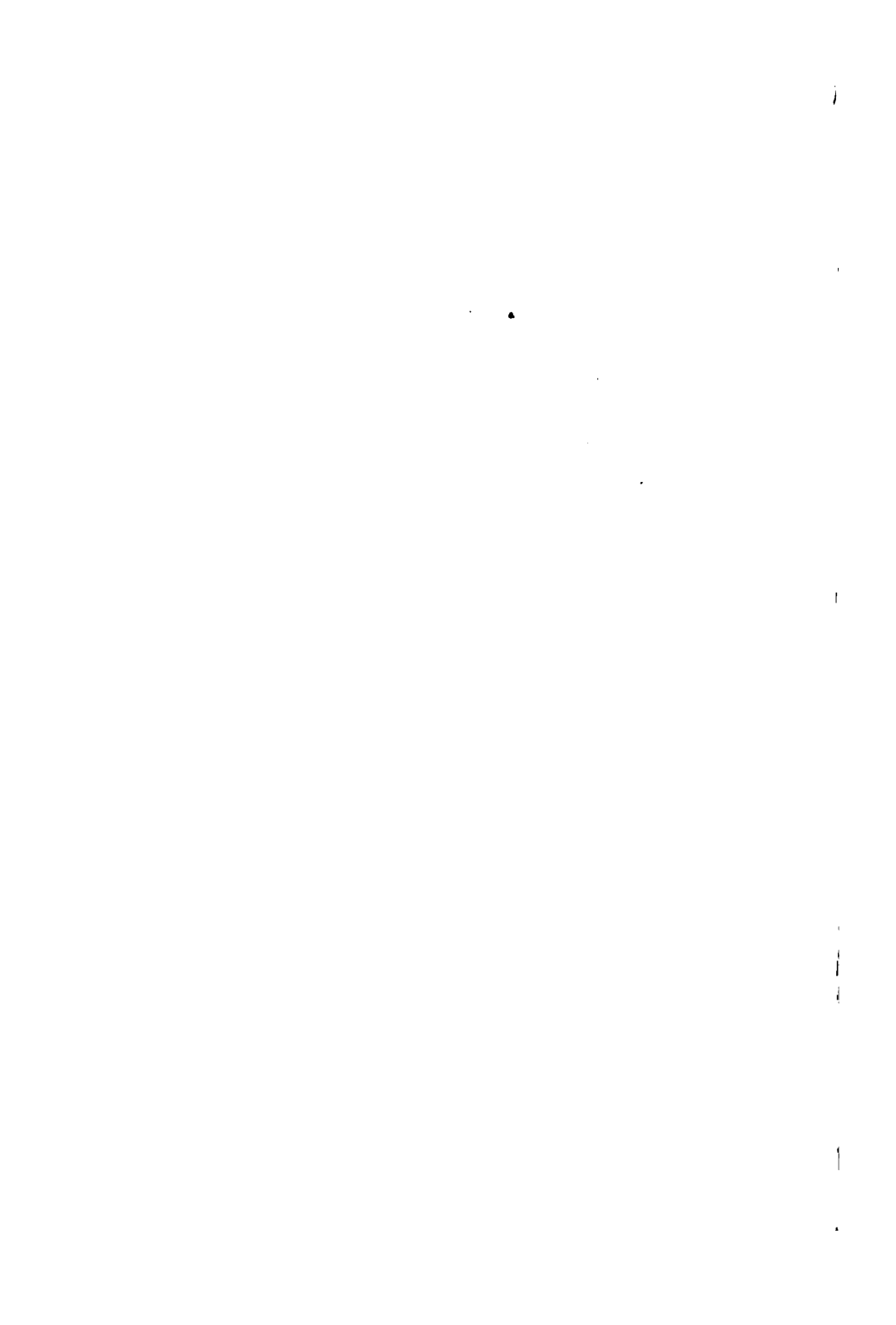
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# THE RISING GENERATION





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# THE RISING GENERATION

BY

CONSTANCE ELIZABETH MAUD

AUTHOR OF "AN ENGLISH GIRL IN PARIS," "WAGNER'S HEROES,"  
"WAGNER'S HEROINES," "HEROINES OF POETRY," ETC.

*"Presently the younger generation will come knocking  
at my door. . . ."*—IBSEN.

THE BOOK COVER DESIGNED BY

G. P. JACOMB HOOD

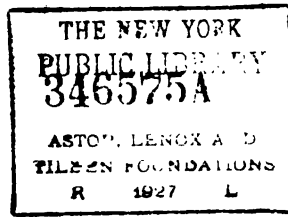
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NOV 23 1927  
CLUB  
YASSEL

TO THE RISING

SPORTIE

DICKIE

NAN

MARY

ANGELICA

FRANK

TUPPY

JOYCE

THE LEETEL

GOO-GOO

&

LE P'TIT

CHOU

11

12

13

14

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	I
I. THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE . . . . .	11
II. A NEW WOMAN . . . . .	31
III. A YOUNG SOCIALIST . . . . .	59
IV. THE HEART OF A SOLDIER . . . . .	78
V. THE REVEREND FREDERICK . . . . .	100
VI. A LORD OF CREATION . . . . .	120
VII. PETER (A SENSITIVE PLANT) . . . . .	154
VIII. THE BACKFISCH . . . . .	177
IX. A DEVOUT LOVER . . . . .	197
X. AN AMERICAN SCHOOL-GIRL . . . . .	220
XI. SPORTIE : A PATRIOT . . . . .	258
XII. GINA OF MOSS ALLEY . . . . .	288



## THE RISING GENERATION

THOSE three words affect the risen generation very variously. A large majority utter them in a tone of distinct disapproval, as if the poor things could help rising if they continue living. "One *must* either grow old or die," as Monna Brigida so truly says.

Others mingle the disapproval with dread. "Tis the younger generation knocking at the door," exclaims Ibsen's "Master Builder," coming to claim their share of life, to enforce their views, to upset the good time-honoured old notions and customs. The risen generation shudder and tremble at that knock, and gladly would they keep the intruders out, forgetting how they themselves not so very long ago knocked in just the same insistent way at the door of an older generation.



## 2 THE RISING GENERATION

But to those who remember, those who have kept fresh in their hearts "the everlasting child," whose eyes look out still with wonder on a wondrous world, who have not yet become used to the stupendous marvel of a starlit night, or the yearly miracle of spring, who see the fairies' footsteps in green meadows, hear the pipes of Pan among the rushes, and the flowers talking in the forest—to these men and women the rising generation are the joy and hope of the world. All they have tried and failed to do, the children will achieve. Where they have but pointed the way, the coming race will march victorious and triumphant, if only they are allowed a fair chance and started with healthy, happy minds and bodies. They are knocking at the door with all their startling questions beginning with a "Why?" And they are not going to be put off as some of us were, for this lot are coming on pretty quick, as the gardeners say; and it is a pathetic but by no means uncommon thing to see parents of quite average understanding completely floored by very babes and sucklings, the latter often grimly

conscious of the fact, though generally possessing too much tact to insist on driving it home. As James Whitcomb Riley makes one of his delightful American children say :—

“Parents knows lots more than us,  
But they don't know all things,  
'Cause we ketch 'em lots o' times,  
Even on little small things.”

In spite of having a studio and spending a good deal of time at an easel, I am a sort of astronomer, that is an idle, do-nothing astronomer, taking my observations, not on the cold dark nights, but on the fine sunny days. My sky is a wide breezy common, across which the feet of the children twinkle and dance. Some are comets dancing hither and thither with a trail of light and laughter. Others take their daily course, school satchel in hand, unswerving as any planet. Some are falling stars, whom moon-faced nursemaids lift again while the green resounds with howls more noisy than woeful.

My observatory is an old-fashioned bow-window, through the diamond panes of which

#### 4 THE RISING GENERATION

the cluster-rose and jasmine look in and nod. It is an idle window ; the easel stands at another looking out on a quiet garden — a working window that one. But the idle window on the green draws me often like a magnet. Windows overlooking a green or market-place have always had a great attraction for me. One feels as if at the theatre and watching a play, with the further advantage of being quite unable to guess what will happen next.

Big and little, rich and poor, naughty and good, I watch the children come and go. As they pass my window, many draw up on tip-toe and peer in with a grin, knowing, even when we are still strangers, in virtue of a subtle and sure Freemasonry, that inside lurks a friend, if not accomplice.

My brother Peter pretends he does not like children. He tells them so in a gruff, bear-like growl. But it is no use : they only shriek with delight and beg him to "do it again."

Peter is commonly known as the Professor. He spends most of his time at the British Museum burrowing among ancient manuscripts,

and the title sounds in keeping with the occupation ; but for all that, the thick, yellow thatch on his head has not as yet a touch of grey, and the twinkle in his absurdly blue eyes is unchanged since his Harrow days.

My working window looks out on a garden famous for its roses and strawberries. The green lawn slopes down to the river. There is a sun-dial, and a fountain, and a clump of trees, which do duty in turn as the Forest of Arden, Fair Rosamond's Labyrinth, and an Enchanted Wood, the haunt of witches and robbers.

Peter says he loves peace and quiet, but no one would think so could they see him sometimes in that garden playing "Gulliver with the Lilliputians," or "Bishop Hatto and the Rats."

Mrs. Staggs, our housekeeper (and every other sort of keeper, soul and body included), says, "When Mr. Peter gets with them children it's a perfect Pan-armonium."

Mrs. Staggs is the only person of whom I am really afraid, and she knows it in spite of

## 6 THE RISING GENERATION

the care I take not to show it. She would lay down her life for me, I know, and for Peter she would undergo slow martyrdom; but her contempt for us both, as helpless, irrational, incapable, shiftless beings, is not to be measured.

She lived with us in the old days and knew us in pinafores, and this fact somehow endows her with a most unholy weapon, which she wields unscrupulously. How can any one maintain a properly dignified attitude when confronted with a graphic reminiscence of the first struggling humiliating years of their early infancy? It would undermine the dignity of an Archbishop.

Mrs. Staggs is fond of referring to our old home in Leicestershire, and to the bygone magnificence of our house. The other day she told a friend of mine whom she desired to impress, that "the 'all was the 'ansomest in the county, antlets and flags flying from the ceiling and set round with busks of the family on pillows of marble."

Mrs. Staggs generally speaks of Peter and

me as "a sinking ship," whom in spite of wreck and storm she refuses to desert while life lasts. She trembles to think what would happen if we were left to the giddiness, heedlessness, rapacity of "Mary Hanne," "Hemily" and Co. "Eat up by comerans the pair of you'd be, like them 'elpless 'Babes in the Wood,'" says Mrs. Staggs prophetically.

The green is surrounded by old-fashioned houses hidden away in their trees and gardens. Of the drawing-rooms and their inhabitants I know but little, though social tyranny obliges me occasionally to put on gloves and sit there talking of the weather and the influenza.

It is in the nurseries, schoolrooms, fields, and gardens where my friends dwell. We never bore each other, and are never reduced to either the weather or the influenza as subjects of conversation, even during the ordeal of a two hours' sitting, for I sometimes require human flowers in the gardens which I paint. And when you come to consider the limitless territory it is ours to roam, why should we ever bore each other? No foolish barriers or

## 8 THE RISING GENERATION

prejudices close such subjects between us as religion or politics ; while art, science, and conduct are discussed spontaneously, fundamentally, and, as the French say, with the "open heart." But with those people in the drawing-rooms and dining-rooms one is restricted on all sides by the fear either of boring or shocking them. You start a subject of really palpitating interest, such as the latest arrival at the Zoo or the latest invention in fireworks, and you see them stifling a yawn or smiling vacantly ; discouragement creeps into your soul and soon paralyses your tongue. Then the subject of religion, with all its thrilling questions of miracles, angels, heaven, hell, whales of Jonah, fish of Tobit, sun of Joshua, these drawing-room or dining-room people relegate to Church and their particular parson's view. An open-minded discussion such as you may hear in the nursery or on the top of a haystack is simply impossible. The people who attend St. Augustine's-on-the-Hill and those who pray at St. Luke the Evangelist's regard each other as in the darkness of night, and if you happen

---

in your ignorance to ignore this and take for granted that being members of the same Church they have a religion in common, you soon discover that neither party have anything in common with you, and the weather is much your safest subject.

It is the same with politics. That ground is marked, like the weir near the lock, Danger !

So we others, who are lovers of peace in spite of our thirst for knowledge and daring spirit of inquiry, tread cautiously as we move in the presence of those grown-up people who know everything for certain. With constraint we breathe their atmosphere of closed windows and doors, and Oh ! what a sigh of relief we heave up from the depths of our being, as we sit down with a flop on the top of some congenial haystack, and begin our endless string of "I wonders," and "Whys," and "Supposings," which launch us out upon the wide seas or the wide heavens, everywhere that thought can travel without let or hindrance.

Some among us have strong dramatic tastes. In darkest secrecy we plan our plays, tableaux,



10      **THE RISING GENERATION**

and Living Pictures which shall astonish, and occasionally admonish, our audiences.

One such performance took place not long ago at the Manor House Theatre. The effect was so considerable upon some members of the audience that I regret to state the censor withdrew the licence for further performances for a month.

I must confess that I can take none of the credit of this performance to myself. It originated entirely with the directors of the Manor House Company.

# I

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE

"HOLIDAYS having begun, the Manor House Theatre will re-open to-day at 11.30, Tuesday morning July 10th. Tableaux of famous events in the Boer War will be performed. Also Living Pictures and stirring scenes from the Bible, *Morning Post*, and Shakespeare. Admission for relations and Servants 1 penny—Dogs and Children half-price."

On coming down to breakfast one morning I found this notice, printed in characters of blood-red hue, pinned up outside the dining-room door; and stuck to my plate by a piece of black plaster was an envelope inscribed "Important."

"Them Manor House children," said Mrs. Staggs as she brought in my letters and kindly prepared me for their contents by the informa-

12 THE RISING GENERATION

tion that one was from India, another Edinburgh, two looked like bills, and one was a hand she did not know. She had taken Mr. Peter his "lot" (an office she reserves jealously to herself), and she did not think he would be down for another twenty minutes by the look of him. "Them Manor House children," repeated Mrs. Staggs, "here before the milk, and making noise enough to wake the dead till I come up and spoke to 'em. Just wild they are with their 'olidays — a nice 'an'-full!"

I opened my "Important" envelope and read out: "One complimentary stall."

Mrs. Staggs snorted disapproval. "There's a deal too much of that play-actin' nowadays. They wanted to go straight up to your room, and if I 'adn't 'appened to come up 'earing the talking wasn't the milk, it's my belief that silly thing Mary Hanne would 'ave let them hall up. She sez Miss Midge 'as such a way with 'er. I think myself Master Fitz comes over you worst. He begs and begs, 'Oh please do, Mrs. Staggs, this once.' 'No,' I says, 'not a

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE 13

step further. I won't 'ave my young lady turmoiled at this hour, not if it was the Prince of Wales, so now then! Then they wheedles round till I let them stick up this paper—enough to give you a turn all blood colour the first thing in the mornin'—and Miss Midge, the artful little monkey, says: 'May we come again later, Mrs. Staggs, dear?' Not 'aving an 'cart of stone which would 'ave been a godsend through life, I says, "'Arf pars ten then, if you go now quiet.' Why, if she isn't there already walking up and down outside! hall alone too! Oh, you naughty gurl, miss."

I called to my early guest from the window, and Midge bounded in.

"Did you get that paper Fitz stuck on your plate?" she asked eagerly.

I expressed my gratitude and sense of the distinction conferred on me by the generous directors of the Manor House Theatre.

"Mother says you must come and have tea with her first, or she'll be awfully much hurt. Don't forget, doors open at 11.30, curtain rises at a quarter-past five. Mother says it

## 14 THE RISING GENERATION

can't rise sooner," she added sadly, "'cause you'll all be out drivin' or somethin'."

"Why open the doors so early then?"

"Oh, 'cause of the crowd for the pit. There's always a awful crowd for Living Tableaux, you know; seats have to be reserved soon as possible. Uncle Dick took Fitz to see some at the Palace of London, so he knows just like they ought to be done!"

"I see. And who are the actors to-day?" I asked.

"Well, me, of course, and Harold and Sue, and Frederick from Tudor House if his aunt 'ull let him come. Fitz does the stage-managery." Then confidentially: "We've got such a scrumptious tableau for Frilly! Fitz made it up; he and Frilly's always quarrellin' about the Kaiser. Fitz can't abide him, and he doesn't mind a pin saying it, now it's holidays. He's nine last birthday, you know. I'm six. I mus' go now. I'm not susposed to be here. I'm susposed to be going out a drive with Gran'ma."

This information was accompanied by a

puckering up of Midge's small kittinish countenance. Then by way of excuse for an implied lack of appreciation of Gran'ma's society—

"You know she isn't our own Gran'ma like the one hanging on the wall in church. She's only a 'step,' Fitz says."

"Oh Midge, Midge! But who brought you here?"

"Myself did. You see Fitz was comin' too—he wanted to mos' awfully badly, and Uncle Dick called him away. He's hatin' Uncle Dick jus' now. I heard him say a mos' awful swear word at 'im low down for stoppin' him coming."

"What word? Oh, but perhaps I had better not hear," I hastened to add.

"Oh yes, I'll whisper it!" And Midge clutched me round the neck, and drawing my head down, shouted "Deuce" in a "whisper" loud enough to reach the domain of Mrs. Staggs.

I gave a horrified "Oh," and added: "I hope Fitz won't ever say such a dreadful word to me—it would make me very sad."

"Oh no, he won't, I don't think. He says Camilla's his favourite name, and he's going to marry you when he's big."

"Really! Well, tell him it will be a hard place. I shall want him to wheel me about in a bath-chair all day, because by then I shall be too old and fat to walk—like old Mrs. Parkins, you know."

Midge looked at me thoughtfully. "I'll tell him," she said; "but I don't believe he'll mind. He says he's in love with you and," Midge lowered her voice to a stage whisper, "and he'd shoot any big man who tried to marry you bang down dead with his new gun."

"Good gracious," I cried; "I hope it isn't loaded! Tell Fitz he must never fire it off without counting ten slowly and loudly so as to give us all notice. A sudden bang would shatter my nerves, and I'd never be able to paint any more pictures!"

"Shatter my nerves," repeated Midge. "Yes, I'll tell him. I know what you mean—it's just what it does to me when Fitz fires it off near my ear."

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE 17

I packed Miss Midge off in charge of Mrs. Staggs, having extracted a promise that she would never come again without being "supposed" to do so, and having given one in return to attend the performance very "punctually" and bring Professor Peter too if possible.

. . . . .  
We were all having tea in the drawing-room at the Manor House when the stage-manager descended to collect his audience. They proved a most troublesome set, and the manager, hot and flustered, was obliged to resort both to threats and bribes.

I brought Professor Peter's excuses. He was still in town "earning his living."

Gran'ma, a smart little lady with marvellous blonde curls and surprisingly black eyebrows and red lips, together with Aunt Phoebe, her elderly daughter, refused to be hurried over their second cups.

Mummie would stop to finish a letter.

Daddy and Cousin Dick had gone out, forgetting all about it, and, what was worse, taking



## 18 THE RISING GENERATION

with them Nipper, the fox-terrier, who was cast for an important part. They were tracked at last to the stables, and roped in with difficulty by Midge.

Nurse, unearthed reluctantly from her domain, took her seat in the stalls with Charles Edward, a keen theatre-goer, aged two, declaring she oughtn't to be wasting her time "over such silly antics."

An old Admiral, godfather to Fitz, was the only guest besides myself not of the family. We two were a shining example to the rest in the promptitude with which we responded to the stage-manager and presented our tickets at the door. The wind was somewhat taken out of my sails by the Admiral proclaiming his paper as one "Complimentary Royal Box," a distinction which I might have resented had I not realised my rival's overwhelming advantage, not only as having attained an almost fabulous age, but in possessing no less than six "war medals."

He had lately become affianced to Sue, the eldest daughter of the house. After a hot contest between that maiden and her sister Midge

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE 19

for the honour of his hand, he had been raffled for, and Chance, or Destiny, as Maeterlinck would, I feel sure, designate such a case, had decided he should fall to Sue, whose passion for red coats, blue coats, medals, and all the trappings of war, had commenced before she was able to express it otherwise than by licking the paint off a regiment of wooden heroes.

I only heard of the raffle after it had taken place, or I should myself have begged to be allowed a "draw," so fascinating to me are all Admirals, even in their embryo stage of "Middy," and specially this particular Admiral.

Sue's fiancé required no little courage and agility in mounting to his royal box (an arm-chair erected on a table draped with scarlet), but once there he was gloriously select even if a trifle insecure, and as Midge observed, since he had once been a real live midshipman and climbed up the masthead, if he couldn't mount a "complimentary box," who could?

Fräulein came in last, explaining elaborately that with this performance she had absolutely nothing to do; her advice had not even been

asked! She trusted therefore we would excuse all shortcomings. A loud cough of disapprobation from behind the scenes was the only response.

A bell sounded, and the curtains divided, rising slowly on either side, "like what they do at His Majesty's," as Midge pointed out.

At one end of the stage, in the door of a tent, sat a small but solid military man, evidently of high rank, as indicated by his plumed cocked hat and conspicuous row of medals. The ground was strewn with empty champagne bottles and telegraph forms which the officer was writing, correcting, and tearing up with an air of concentrated fury. A stiff-looking aide-de-camp stood at his side, a large champagne bottle in hand, which the great man pressed to his lips whenever he paused in his arduous task. At intervals a bull's-eye lantern flashed energetically from the farther end of the stage, and produced invariably a fresh access of wrath and telegraph forms.

"Scene number one, from the Boer War," announced the stage-manager, "One of the

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE 21

British Generals spatchcocking telegrams to the General inside that Ladysmith has got to surrender. But Ladysmith is signalling back (work that bull's-eye, can't you !) that as long as they've got rats and mice enough to last, blowed if they will ! ”

As the curtain descended slowly, a voice from the royal box was heard muttering mid the shower of claps—

“That scoundrel Dick ! Ah, sir, you'd a hand in that, I'll lay ! And to think I wrote that letter to the War Office for you this morning.”

In an astonishingly short time the manager had prepared another tableau, and announced : “Second scene from the Boer War.” As the curtain rose, two Generals in cocked hats and medals were shown standing on a hillock in the middle of an arid-looking plain. With enormous field-glasses they examined the distant country, while just behind them, under the shadow of the kopje on which they stood, sat a bearded gentleman in a slouch hat, his umbrella up, a long clay pipe in his mouth, and a ferocious-looking whip across his knees.

## 22 THE RISING GENERATION

"English Generals searching the country for De Wet! That's him smoking," remarked the stage-manager dryly.

The third scene was some time preparing. The audience became impatient, and Fräulein made a movement towards the curtain, but she was ordered back peremptorily by the stage-manager on guard inside. "This one is specially for you, so you go back and wait for it," advised Fitz. The something ominous in his tone escaped Fräulein in the flattering assurance that it had been specially prepared for her.

"De childern dey make dis picture for me!" she observed with complacency to me; and I, recalling Midge and the "scrumptious tableau," replied with doubt in my heart, "How very flattering."

"Third scene from the Boer War! German William sucking up to Kruger and his wife," announced the manager in clear-cut tones.

A stout, homely-looking Darby and Joan sat side by side in arm-chairs watching with an indulgent smile a pompous little figure, conspicuous for enormous moustache and helmet

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE 23

surmounted by a large bird, as he laid at their feet various offerings, which he unloaded from a mail-cart. The manager kept up a running commentary on their proceedings in his most sarcastic vein. There was a large bag, presumably of gold, which the old lady seized on, rewarding the helmeted one with a wink and a slap on the back. Then came a big box labelled "Tobacco and Snuff." This the old couple eagerly opened and divided equally. Finally the moustachioed one struggled forward with an unwieldy wooden case bearing the inscription, "Dum-Dum Bullets." Whereupon the old gentleman leaped to his feet, and, contrary to the laws of living tableaux, broke into two lines of the German hymn, "Nun danket unserer Gott." "Kruger is so jolly glad he can't help singing," apologised the stage-manager. "German Bill now humbly takes his leave," he went on. (Here the moustachioed one bent low and kissed first the hands and then the boots of both Mr. and Mrs. Kruger.) "He promises as a partin' present to send his best General to teach 'em how to use the Dum-Dums—Herr Haupt-

## 24 THE RISING GENERATION

man Schweinfleisch von Braten!—*N.B.* I may inform the company that later on German Bill got well rewarded for his little services by England giving him Samoa and fighting his dirty battles and other things we don't know about yet—ahem!"

"Nein aber dass ist wirklich zu viel," cried Fräulein, rising, purple with indignation. "No longer stay I for dies insult to de Vaterland—to de Kaiser. Lieber Himmel, when only de 'ole back of you could sit von year in a Chairman prizen for 'lèse-majesté'!" The door slammed violently behind the outraged lady.

"Fräulein had best come back, as the next one is English," cried the manager. "That's the only Kaiser tableau for to-day." He was glad his shaft had struck home, but had no wish to diminish his audience.

"There will be no stage-manager present in the next tableau, as he's got to make the thunder for the murder; you can't have murders without a storm," explained the manager, "and Harold's got to do the lightenin'."

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE 25

The audience were still in the midst of a heated discussion raised by the third scene when the curtain rose again, and a voice from behind the scenes gave out: "Subjick of next scene,—Shakespeare in dumb acting. The Moor makes an end of his unforshonate wife Desdemona, revenging himself for her supposed unfaithfulness."

There was a nervous cough from Aunt Phoebe, and an encouraging gurgle from the heights of the royal box.

Vivid flashes of lightning revealed Desdemona in a large bed on the floor, sleeping peacefully in spite of the harmonium thunder close to her head.

Enter the Moor in night-shirt and smoking-cap, a long rope and knife in his hand. He walks up to the bed and shakes Desdemona, who, terrified, jumps out and kneels before her lord in a white night-dress and blue sash. He replies by dragging her round the stage, and after strangling her with the rope, plunges the knife into her, whereupon red paint gushes out over the night-dress, and the youngest



member of the audience lifts up his voice in a sympathetic howl.

"End of Desdemona," announced the manager dryly, as the curtain descended.

"Ay, and it's the end of us, too," cried the indignant nurse. "No more Shakespeares for me, thank you! There, my dearie, it's all over," and folding her weeping charge in her protecting arms she marched out, shaking the dust off her feet. Charles Edward was howling to come back before he reached the door, but Nurse was inexorable.

A pause now took place for refreshments. "No extra charge," observed Midge, handing lumps of dark brown toffee round to the audience.

"The concludin' tableaux will be out of the Bible," announced the stage-manager.

The mother of the Manor House Theatre Company turned to me: "Dear Camilla, have you any idea what they are going to do?"

"Not the dimmest notion!" I assured her. Thereupon she rose hastily and went behind the scenes.

"Don't stop 'em, for heaven's sake!" called the occupant of the royal box.

"I think perhaps it's as well to know what they're going to do," observed Gran'ma; "I don't like any irreverence."

An agitated whispering began behind the scenes. Presently an eager voice was heard: "No, I promise you,—it's only out of the Ole Testament. Oh, please, mummie, don't look; you'll like it awfully." More whispers, and then a sudden burst: "Oh, it's too bad! How can a feller stage-manage if the audience comes and interferes? There, you've looked!"

"But how can we do Adam and Eve with our clothes on?" cried Midge's shrill pipe. "Harold and me's not a bit cold in these leaves, really and truly we aren't!"

An ominous silence followed, broken at length by a plaintiff voice: "Sue? She's the devil; she's havin' her face blacked."

This proved too much for the audience. There was an eager cry, especially from the box: "Yes, yes, let's have Adam and Eve!" But the powers that be decreed otherwise, and

## 28 THE RISING GENERATION

this instructive tableau was ruthlessly cut out of the programme.

It was a very dejected stage-manager who announced the next item. He "had hoped to give something before this *ever* so much nicer, but a certain person, whose name he scorned to betray, had, worse luck, prevented it."

At this point he was somewhat cheered by an addition to the audience, some visitors from Tudor House appearing. Fräulein also slipped quietly into a seat at the back, curiosity getting the better of pride.

"Jezebel at her winder—Jehu and his three dogs calling to the Eunicks to throw her out."

Leaning out of an opening high up between the window-curtains was a little old lady bearing a startling resemblance to "Gran'ma"; the same blonde curls, marked eyebrows, and crimson lips. "Gran'ma" raised her gold eyeglass and bent forward. Yes! It *was* her best Paris bonnet with the pink moss-roses! What on earth could Félicie be about to have let them get at it! And—her finest lace mantle!

Another person in the audience recognised,

## THE MANOR HOUSE THEATRE 29

with a gasp, her blue silk skirt draped over Jezebel's shoulders.

Jezebel's expression was smiling and defiant; you could almost hear the taunting words hurled at the doughty warrior below. The likeness between Midge's Jezebel and Midge's "Gran'ma" was staggering. The curtain fell amid a storm of applause in which Daddy's claps were conspicuous, his mother-in-law alone appearing lukewarm.

"Jezebel has now been thrown out of window; the next scene will explain her trachick end," announced the indefatigable manager. "There'll be a storm," he added, "but the lightnin's got to be sheet, 'cause there's no one to do the thunder."

The curtain rose slowly, as though reluctant to reveal the horror behind it. Huddled on the ground lay the blue silk dress and mantle, but minus Jezebel! The three dogs gnawed away ferociously at some horribly suggestive bones. Strewn about were various articles of apparel, a boot, some stays, the bonnet with pink roses, a pair of spectacles, and in the

30    THE RISING GENERATION

foreground a double row of grinning teeth, the sight of which caused both Gran'ma and the Admiral to put their hands anxiously to their mouths—a needless alarm, they were the cook's.

“Ach lieber Himmel!” cried Fräulein suddenly. “See den Neepair, what *his* 'ee takin' in de mouse?”

Nipper had advanced to the front with a curious object between his teeth—a tuft of fluffy auburn curls, which he shook savagely and then tore at with his paws.

There was a shriek in the audience, followed by a general commotion. Everybody seemed to be rushing on the stage. The dogs set up a furious barking, ending in a free fight between Nipper and the Irish setter for the auburn curls which the distracted stage-manager vainly attempted to rescue. His voice at last rang out above the tumult. “Ladies and gentlemen, to-day's pifformance is endid. This theatre will re-open to-morrer.”

But to the great regret of both the Admiral and myself, the Manor House Theatre did not re-open on the morrow, nor once again during Gran'ma's visit.

## II

### A NEW WOMAN

SOMETIMES from my observatory I witness a curious astronomical phenomenon. A comet which has long delighted my eyes with its brilliant and erratic career will reappear suddenly as a small steady-going planet, generally, I am bound to add, in close companionship with a larger planet under whose sphere of influence it apparently moves, all its comet qualities completely obliterated.

This change came over a favourite comet of mine about six months ago. It had been in the habit of moving in the same track with one about its own size, both giving out a streak of that quality of light which goes with curly hair, laughing eyes, and flying feet. But six months ago the path of these two suddenly divided, and the lesser one was har-

nessed to a large staid planet and forced reluctantly to move in a well-ordered path from sunrise to sunset. The event which brought about this change was that having attained the age of eight years, Jack Willoughby became a full-blown school-boy at Dr. Macnab's day school. Up to that time he and his sister Joan had been inseparable as two cherries on one stalk. They had climbed trees, bird-nested, played football and wild Indians together, learnt swimming, dancing, and singing at a Kindergarten, made soap-bubbles and toffee, and never worn gloves except on Sunday.

But from the time Jack went to school all was changed. In proportion as his life widened out, poor Joan's closed in, till she began to feel like the man in the "Haunted Chamber" who every morning found another window had disappeared from his room.

It was "mayn't do this" and "mayn't do that" from morning till night. Mademoiselle, a new and most undesired importation, and Nurse, seeming to vie with one another in warped and bigoted views of life for the un-

happy maiden, till the sad conviction was forced upon her that "girls mayn't do nothin' jolly," and the seed of discontent was sown which made of Joan a New Woman.

One memorable day last October the first blow was struck for freedom. All honour be to Jack, for he it was with whom the idea originated, and his bold undaunted spirit which put strength and determination into the fluttering heart of Joan.

Jack had just "rigged up" for a paper-chase, lucky Jack, with the other fellows at Mac-nab's. His costume the ideal of comfort and freedom—a transparent zephyr garment, a pair of socks, and some running shoes, which, as I saw him fly across the Green, reminded me of Mercury's winged sandals.

Joan had been enjoying an hour's respite in my studio, while to her delight I put her with her pink sunbonnet into a picture I was doing of an old cottage garden.

Jack came to take her home, Mademoiselle requiring her immediate attendance for a walk, a walk with gloves on. Mademoiselle delighted



## 34 THE RISING GENERATION

in the shops and paving stones of the town, while Joan's heart longed for fields with deep ditches which required jumping, and thick-set hedges to be scrambled through terrier-wise, consequently these two ran in harness about as comfortably as a hedgehog and a hare.

Joan gazed at Jack with big eyes in which the tears slowly gathered.

"Awful hard lines you can't come too!" Jack looked regretfully at his former companion in every undertaking, good or bad.

"Girls mayn't do *nothin'* jolly," answered Joan with a short, sharp sigh which spoke volumes of conviction.

"Beastly bad luck you've got to be a girl," rejoined Jack sympathetically. And then a sudden idea flashed through his inventive brain. Jack was always getting ideas. It was what made him "so fearfully jolly to live with," as Joan confided to me. Remembering Jack's partiality for firearms and explosives, I heartily agreed.

"Tell you what," Jack had begun, and then realising that time pressed he promised Joan should hear the rest at teatime.

Joan went off pondering deeply what Jack's new idea might be. It was sure to be something awfully clever, but I could see poor Joan could not suppress a sickening fear lest, as had so often happened lately, she should be excluded from "the show" on account of her unfortunate sex.

I, too, wondered what form of compensation or mitigation of her lot the "new idea" would take. Anyhow it was good to see such sympathy with the oppressed, and such an unusual sense of justice as displayed by the generous heart beating beneath Jack's zephyr.

According to appointment sanctioned by the powers ruling Joan's orbit, she was to return next afternoon for another sitting.

I had almost given her up when in dashed the two, Jack and Joan, breathless and comet-wise as of old. For a moment I hardly knew which was which, for lo, both were boys! Not a vestige remained of my fair sitter with the sunny-brown curls and pink bonnet. In her place there was a sturdy youngster with round cropped head and boy's straw hat, and

### 36 THE RISING GENERATION

one of those kilted sailor suits which Joan told me with sparkling eyes the shopman had declared "equally suitable for young ladies and young gentlemen of six years old."

"I'm going to be a boy," shouted Joan at the top of her newly expanding lungs—"a boy—a boy! Aren't I, Jack? We done it all this morning!"

And then over tea and blackberries in the studio I heard the whole tale of Jack's famous "new idea." It did seem, as Jack explained, rough luck that Joan, who was equal in pluck and "game" to any fellow at Macnab's, should be excluded from all those sports and pastimes in which she would have done worthy credit to her brother, and be condemned to a life, Jack could not disguise from himself, *he* would not consider worth living, and all because an arbitrary fate had decreed she was to be a girl! "Cut her hair short, put her in boy's clothes, and send her to old Macnab's next term!" This had been Jack's grand inspiration.

The more he had thought of it, the more he

had warmed to it. Very opportunely there were to be school sports the coming Saturday. Jack determined that by way of a preliminary canter the "new boy" should run in the strangers' race, a handicap open to small boys from six to eight years.

Experience had taught that, with all new ideas, the Galileos of this world must expect to suffer opposition. Mademoiselle, Uncle Richard, and Nurse would, he knew, give trouble, not because it was their business, but just from the "grown-up's" wanton desire to interfere with children. Dad was in India, and not coming home for a whole year, so no need to take him into account at present.

From his mother Jack hoped ultimately for sympathy and assistance. She was of a character singularly reasonable and sweet, and Jack could generally manage her if not interfered with. "The great thing," said Jack, "is to do what you've got to do, and explain it to Mummie afterwards, then if she can't agree any way about it, she says, 'Well, don't do it again, darling,' and of course you don't!"

## 38 THE RISING GENERATION

Acting on this theory, Jack determined on taking the preliminary step before broaching the subject. The big nursery scissors would settle Joan's shock of brown curls in no time, and a sailor suit, grown too short and tight for his own sturdy person, would complete the transformation. Jack was nothing if not prompt.

Five o'clock next morning was the hour fixed for the haircutting. "'Cause you see," said Jack, "we had to do it 'fore anybody was up. You can't be interrupted while you're cutting hair ; that's why we went into the kitchen garden. Forshunately no one came there 'cept Jim Spooner."

I inquired who was Jim Spooner.

"He's the garden boy—a most awfully useful sort of boy," chimed in Joan warmly.

"Yes, he's pretty useful to me," said Jack, "and he'd be more useful still if that old gump of a gardener wasn't always complaining and saying I take him off his work. Anyhow, he came along in the nick of time this morning, for I'd got up in such a bloomin' hurry and had such a job dressing Joe here—her

name is changed, you know—that blest if I hadn't forgotten the nursery scissors."

"Yes," said Joan, "he left them under his pillow, and Nurse *was* in a rage when she found them there!"

"Oh, her rages don't matter to me now," replied Jack, with the manly indifference of the newly fledged school-boy. "But," he continued, "Jim Spooner fished out a good sharp pair of garden shears, so we got her done all right, you see."

I turned the bullet-headed Joan round and round, in hopes one curly lock might have escaped. "I see," I said with a sigh, "they are all gone!"

"It felt very cold at the back of my neck at first," said Joan, "and the top seemed just like the dining-room carpet, but I like it most awfully now."

"She was in a funk of the shears; you see they were pretty big ones," explained Jack. "But Jim held her head, and we fixed her on the water-can, so she couldn't wobble about, and then it went like a house o' fire."

"All my curls was on the gravel path," cried Joan; "they looked like tiny little rabbits when the wind blowed them about."

Poor Joan—"Il faudrait souffrir pour devenir 'garçon'!" I could picture her in the chill October morning seated on the water-can, clenching her hands, bravely determined not to cry out, and shutting her eyes tight that she might not see the wild-looking shears, as, wielded by Jack, they opened their terrible jaws first on one side of her head, then the other, while curly tufts of brown hair strewed the ground like falling leaves.

"What did your mother say when she saw Joan?" I asked.

Jack looked rather embarrassed.

"Well, you see we wanted it to be a s'prise for Mummie—and it was," he answered. "We ran up to her bedroom while she was fast asleep, and told her to guess a s'prise we'd got for her—'cause you see it was quite dark in her room and she couldn't see yet. She guessed a new caterpillar and a young jackdaw and all sorts of things, only she couldn't guess

right. Then at last we tried to help her out, and told her it began with a B and had got two legs."

"Yes, and what do you think she guessed then?" cried Joan. "Why baboon—sort of monkey, you know!"

"Well, she wasn't far off there," I remarked, "it *was* a sort of monkey! But what did she say when she saw it?"

"I counted ten while she shut her eyes, and then we drew the curtains and let her look, and then—why then—" Jack hesitated—"she was most awfully much s'prised—it made her laugh till the tears came rolling down her cheeks. But she's all right now," he added hastily.

"Yes, she's all right now," added Joan. "She wasn't quite certain at first it really was me, you see—and she rubbed her eyes and then she took me in her arms and felt my head all over, and that's what made her cry, I b'lieve."

"Anyhow, Mummie's promised to do her best and see if Joe can't stay a boy; so it's all right," summed up Jack cheerfully, as he started



42 THE RISING GENERATION

in with a fresh plate of blackberries and cream.

"Uncle Richard's comin' day after temor-rer," announced Joan ; and a sort of depression promptly fell on us all. We shook it off bravely, however, and finished our afternoon in the garden where some cuttings were being taken which would be useful in other people's own particular plots.

Nurse's version was that it gave her "such a turn" when those two children came into the nursery that you could have knocked her down with a feather. "Don't tell me that's Miss Joan," she had besought. "For mercy's sake, whatever have you been after, Master Jack, you naughty good-for-nothing boy, you ! For it didn't need no glasses," she added significantly, "to see whose work that pore darlin's head was."

But Nurse had shown no outward signs of weakness whatever her feelings had been. Sternly and vigorously she had scrubbed both her charges from head to foot before allowing them to sit down to breakfast.

After her first exclamation of horror at the sight of Joan's mutilated locks, she had contented herself with grunts and groans, stopping all attempts at explanation with, "There—don't talk to me; whatever your pore mama'll do I'm sure I don't know. It'll break her heart, it will. And your pore papa away in India, too! it's shameful, that's what it is!"

. . . . .

At a solemn council of three the sorely perplexed mother had decided on a compromise. Until Uncle Richard had been consulted no decisive step could be taken. He was expected the day before the "Sports," but a warning presentiment determined Jack to say no word to him or any one else about "The Strangers' Race."

"They might stop the whole blooming show," he warned Joan, "so mum's the word. Just train up hard as you can till Saturday, and don't eat any bread or potatoes. Get a hunk of beef if you can at twelve o'clock instead of an apple—that's what Shuttleworth major recommen's."

## 44 THE RISING GENERATION

To feel that she might follow, however distantly, where the great Shuttleworth led the way filled the heart of Joan with proud delight. For Jack pronounced him "a ripper," "a feller *any* feller would be jolly lucky to have as a friend." His big brother, "an awful decent chap at Woolwich," had given Shuttleworth major a double-barrelled revolver last birthday, and he had promised to let Jack fire it off in the shrubbery some day. Joan lived in hopes of being permitted to hear that heart-stirring sound.

Joan obstinately declined all potatoes, but the path of the poor training one was beset with difficulties. The whole world, even including her mother, seemed combined against her. "Don't want any potatoes? Nonsense, dear, eat them up at once." And though Joan managed each day to drop half the obnoxious vegetable under the table, every mouthful she swallowed was, she felt, an additional chance lost.

And Mrs. Ellis, the cook, thinking the beef begged for at twelve o'clock was for the raven, doled out such appalling morsels Joan's courage failed her even with eyes shut.

Fate was equally cruel on her attempts at training in the kitchen garden. If it did not pour with rain, either Nurse or Mademoiselle was sure to rout her out just as she began.

I happened to be present the afternoon Uncle Richard arrived. We had been striking some of the new cuttings in the garden, and all three looked very disreputable.

I have known Uncle Richard for years, and take a special delight in quarrelling with him. My independent position, and the obvious enjoyment I derive from it, is a cause of intense irritation to Uncle Richard. As to a woman artist, she is, if taking art seriously, an abnormal freak, thoroughly unsexed by her training. He simply shudders to think of the sights I must have seen at that Slade school, to say nothing of that studio in Paris. Don't tell him ! He knows what goes on in those dens of iniquity and impropriety. All very fine to say, "To the pure all things are pure"—Bunkum ! Let girls stick to flower painting in their own boudoirs, as his dear old aunts did. "A profession"—Earn money !—Independence—These

46      THE RISING GENERATION

are the watchwords of the New Woman, that vampire eating at the roots of domestic peace and order. He would as soon see a sister or daughter of his an actress at once, as a "professional" artist, or that other plausible atrocity, a hospital nurse. As to that last, he has heard graphic accounts of her initiation! He generally winds up with a fervent wish, pronounced in the tone of a malediction, that I were married "to a good, sensible husband." That is what I really need, he assures me—what every woman needs, artist or no artist! I retaliate by pointing out that the supply of this particular stamp of man being, as I have it on his own authority, very limited, a large number of women must either remain unwed or put up with an inferior article. Surely he would not recommend me to place my fate in the hands of a fool! Being so well as I am, let me be! "*Le mieux et l'ennemi du bien.*" Besides, the tone in which this blessing of matrimony is recommended, suggesting, as it does, prison bars and a jailor, is hardly a bait to a bird of freedom!

Yet in spite of all I say, and the aggravation

it is to him, Uncle Richard cannot leave me alone. I suppose he regards me as a brand to be plucked from the burning, and this partly because of a little picture which hangs in his library in town of a certain old Dutch garden in which he spent many happy hours as a boy. There is nothing in it to suggest to his mind the wicked Paris studio, or even the Slade school; only an old yew hedge, an old iron gate, and a border of hollyhock, larkspur, sweet-william, and carnation, the good scent of which, he says, comes back to him across the years when he looks at the picture.

Uncle Richard's wife is a chronic invalid, who spends all her winters abroad, and has "a crisis," as the French call it, the moment she is contradicted. She has hung like a millstone round the neck of poor Uncle Richard all his life, but he is quite happy in the conviction that she is a thoroughly "womanly woman," and has never realised that there is no tyranny so absolute as the tyranny of nerves. Happily he has one son, a boy at Harrow, in whom his best hopes are centred, and for

48 THE RISING GENERATION

whose sake he forgives his wife all feminine deficiencies.

Jack and Joan greeted Uncle Richard with polite restraint. He is "very kind and all that," as Jack says, but he has not the gift of placing small people on an easy footing with himself.

"Bless me, Miss Joan, what have they been doing with your hair?" he asked, holding his niece at arm's length and looking at her through his eyeglass. "Well, I wouldn't give much for your chances now! You wouldn't care to paint *her* picture, eh, Miss Camilla? They have spoilt your beauty for you this time," he laughed.

"I don't care if they have," said Joan nervously. "I'm goin' to be a boy."

"Going to be a what?" asked Uncle Richard.

"A boy!" repeated Joan, feeling opposition in the air, and bracing herself to meet it. "A boy! and go to Macnab's with Jack and play cricket and wear knickers and run paper-chases! That's what I'm goin' to do."

"Ho, ho!" cried Uncle Richard. "Ciss, my dear, I congratulate you on your daughter.

Why, here we have that hydra-headed monster, 'The New Woman,' cropping up even in the nursery. Take my advice, my dear," and Uncle Richard's eye showed an ugly gleam, "draw its fangs and cut its claws before it is full grown."

Mummie answered smiling—

"I have not seen any signs of fangs and claws yet, Richard, so we need not have recourse to such violent measures, I hope."

Jack listened nervously. He had a great respect for Uncle Richard's opinion, and still more for the three fine medals his uncle had once shown him. But Jack found it difficult to talk intimately with Uncle Richard, and the defiant way in which Joan made known their "new idea" filled him with uneasiness, only increased by Uncle Richard's words to his mother. He congratulated himself on his forethought in having kept dark all mention of the strangers' race.

Joan could not make out what they were talking about. Was there a new woman in the nursery? and who was it had claws and fangs?



Jack felt sure all this bore on Joan in some way, though how he could not make out. "Uncle Richard," he began, "Mummie says we must ask you before it's quite decided—so would you have any objection to Joan bein' a boy? You see, she does so awfully hate bein' a girl, and she can come to school with me, you know, now her hair's cut short—so it's quite easy!"

"Yes, it's *quite* easy!" chimed in Joan, feeling with a sudden, awful qualm as she looked at Uncle Richard's face that it was not going to be at all easy.

"Now, listen to me, Jack, for you're getting a big boy, and I hope will grow up a sensible fellow like your father before you." Uncle Richard glanced sideways at his sister-in-law, whose head was bent over her work. "Joan's only a girl, so she may be allowed to talk a certain amount of nonsense, provided she behaves like a little lady," he added sharply. "But Joan is a girl, and a girl she will have to remain to the end of the chapter, whether she likes it or whether she don't—so the sooner

she learns to sew and play the piano or paint charming pictures like Miss Camilla here, not in a studio for men, but in her own home, mind you, and make herself useful and pleasant in the house, which remember is the woman's place, instead of running about and talking on platforms, the better for her. Now take *that* home, both of you! And remember, Jack, you're my godson, and I shall be very angry with you if I find you putting any foolish notions into Joan's head. Quite enough will come there without your assistance," he added, and shot another glance at his silent sister-in-law.

"Who cropped your head like that?" he asked, turning round on Joan, whose big brown eyes continued staring up at him full of wonder and dismay.

"Je—Jack did partly," she answered hesitatingly, "and Jim Spooner did round the edges." Then something in her uncle's face made her add quickly, "They aren't ever going to do it again—Mr. Simpson will. It was a surprise for Mummie, only she wasn't a bit glad!" Joan sighed.

"What darned tomfoolery," began Uncle Richard. "Now, Miss Camilla, I appeal to you."

"Oh, please, don't," I laughed.

But just then their mother rose quickly and packed Jack and Joan off to the nursery, not, however, before they heard Uncle Richard say:

"Well, I hope you're happy, Ciss! You have got a New Woman here and no mistake! A good thing Charles is coming home next year to put his foot down!"

Jack and Joan puzzled their heads long over this saying. Who was the woman Uncle Richard so hated? He had said she was in the nursery, but they had not seen her. Now if he had said in the schoolroom, they could have quite understood.

Saturday afternoon found Joan in a state of mingled joy, excitement, and anxiety. Her balked endeavours at training weighed heavily. It was very different with Jack. As he never returned home for the midday meal, he had found no difficulty in abstaining from the forbidden fruit and obtaining what was necessary. His training under the severe *régime* of Shuttle-

worth major had proceeded systematically for six weeks past.

Oh lucky Jack! Of course he was in for everything, mile race, steeple-chase, high jump and all. Joan looked at him and sighed, wondering whether she would ever have real sports too.

At the earnest petition of Jack and Joan I consented to go and see the Sports and keep up the spirits of the "New Woman" who fain would be a "new boy." Her heart beat fast as she took her place between her mother and me in the Pavilion, where sat the proud mothers, sisters, and aunts of the "fellows" at old Macnab's. With her sailor hat, new kilted suit, and closely cropped head, Joan looked a son any mother might be proud of.

Sadly she confided to me that she had been forced to swallow nearly a whole "pertater" at dinner that day. Even Jack's assurance that he himself had swallowed a marble yesterday and felt all the better for it did not bring much consolation.

Then the Sports began. The mile race was

## 54 THE RISING GENERATION

won by Shuttleworth major. Had major stood before instead of after his name Jack could not have felt a deeper reverence for him.

In the high jump Jack himself was first, and in the long jump second. He seemed to have a spring inside him. Who would not be proud of such a brother! Three dull items won by other people's brothers came next. And then the strangers' race was announced, followed by a shuffling of feet in the Pavilion, hats, coats, and gloves torn hastily off as the "strangers" ran forward and presented themselves.

"Mummie" happened to be talking to a friend at the time; when she turned round Joan was no longer at her side. A voice behind her said, "Are you looking for your little boy? I think he has just gone to join in the strangers' race."

And sure enough there at the end of a long row of small boys, ranging from six to nine years old, stood "Joe" with very bright eyes and very pink cheeks.

The master who entered the strangers' names smiled as he wrote down "Joseph Willoughby."

There were several strangers in kilted suits, so his smile could have nothing to do with Joan's clothes. "It must have been because she looked so jolly happy at bein' a boy," reflected Jack afterwards.

It was a handicap race, and Joan found herself placed about midway between the competitors. She looked round anxiously, and Jack came quickly to her side.

"Hinks's brother's just behind you; he is so fat he's got no wind. Then comes Bowles; you'll beat them easy, and the others too by the look of 'em. As to the kids in front you can pass them at a walk. So don't get in a funk, and don't go full speed at first, don't open yer mouth and don't keep on looking round!"

"Oh, Jack, I feel so terrubly excited!" said Joan breathlessly.

Jack felt "terrubly excited" himself, but he said nothing about it, only repeating his bracing directions.

Joan planted her right foot firmly.

The signal was given.

"Off you go!" cried Jack.

And off went Joan, Jack running along the edge of the course all the way and shouting at intervals.

"Keep it up!—Good!—Faster—Faster—Faster—Good! First class—You'll lick! Put it on now—put it on!"

And Joan did "put it on." The prize for which she ran was no mere silver cup or double-bladed knife, it was Freedom and Boyhood, in exchange for petticoated, imprisoned Girlhood! If she won this race she would surely have proved even to Uncle Richard her right to be a boy.

They were half round the course now, and for just three never-to-be-forgotten moments Joan was positively first! But whether at this critical point the potato began to accomplish its deadly work, or whether the sight of a probable victor inspired the rest of the strangers with a fresh burst of energy, certain it is, from this moment poor "Joe Willoughby" began to flag. First Bowles, then the fat Hinks, and then one by one, even the smallest of "the kids"

passed the panting, puffing, gasping stranger who had for a brief instant caused them such keen anxiety.

As for Jack, though his cheering note never ceased, his heart sank as the sad truth forced itself upon him. Joan was losing, alas! being beaten by all, just for lack of proper training. Four days! Why, he had had a steady month! Probably every "stranger" there had been trained for two weeks at least. And then those fatal potatoes!

A shower of claps and cheers announced the fact that Bowles had won the race! And Hinks—fat Hinks—in spite of his natural infirmities, had come in second, thanks to systematic preparation.

"It was all that pertater, Jack," said Joan in a choking voice.

"Never you mind," Jack spoke with forced cheerfulness. "We'll have another try yet—don't give it up!"

But Joan had to give it up, like many a one before her, and return to gloves, and promenades, and Mademoiselle!



As the two uncongenial spirits walk side by side across the Green, Joan's dejected little face says as plainly as though she proclaimed her sentiments on a Woman's Rights platform, "Girl's mayn't do nothin' jolly."

But patience, patience, "my pretty maid," and you will find before long that whether they *may* do them or no, there are just a few things left for the doing of the daughters of Eve which no Uncle Richards can prevent.

### III

#### A YOUNG SOCIALIST

BETTY is an only child, and has never experienced the trials undergone by Joan in learning the sharp contrast between the rights of the two sexes. Problems equally difficult of solution have disturbed her young awakening soul, but they are the trials and sorrows of others, not her own, which have made her tender heart to ache.

In spite of her refined little face and aristocratic air, Betty showed even from her cradle strong democratic tendencies.

Not only did she ignore all class distinctions, but she seemed to lack utterly that sense of the fitness of things so necessary in preserving social barriers and keeping each man in his proper place.

When taught to use special terms of endear-

ment to her rich old uncle, Betty applied the same next day to the butler as he supplied her with a favourite dish: "Thank you so much, dear, kind Williams, I do love you!"

As time went on, Betty's religious education became a serious difficulty. She insisted on applying everything literally and trying to get at the roots of things, instead of just accepting what she was taught at the children's service held by the Reverend Percy Simpkins at St. Augustine-on-the-Hill.

"You must try and have more faith, my darling," urged her mother on one occasion, with rather a weary sigh.

"Oh yes, mother dear, I will," Betty responded cordially. Then, with a puzzled air: "What *is* faith?"

"Faith is just believing without doubting, questioning, or trying to understand too much. Now suppose I said to you, 'Betty, there is an arm-chair in that dark corner of the room,' if my child has faith she believes it, though she can see no arm-chair there. Do you see, Betty dear?"

"Yes, I see, mother—only—" (very gently and tentatively) "I couldn't go and sit on the arm-chair, could I?"

A poser for the mother, who had not yet made up her mind concerning the arm-chair. Query whether faith would not shine more brightly there being no arm-chair? To gain time, however, she sighs deeply, and implores her darling not to contract the habit of arguing, "It is a bad habit in a boy, but far worse in a little girl." This last remark starts fresh currents of thought and diverts Betty from the arm-chair problem for the time, but she forbears to inflict on her harassed parent another "Why?"

Shortly after, being taught the Catechism and benefits of Baptism as set forth therein, Betty asked: "Then why don't they baptize Devil, so he could be made good too?"

It was carefully explained that the personage referred to had, it was feared, no wish to be made "a child of God."

"Well, no more didn't I wish to be made good when I was a quite lickle child o' wrath.

62 THE RISING GENERATION

I was jus took and made a child of God and a heritor of the kingdom of heaven, wasn't I? So then why can't Devil's father and mother jus' christen him one day when he's asleep or isn't looking out?"

On being told that "Devil" was now too big and strong to be treated in this way, Betty expressed it as her opinion that his parents were severely to blame for not having "had him done" when he was "a quite lickle Devil."

To enter into the question of his Satanic Majesty's parentage and nursery days was more than Betty's instructor felt able, so the subject was judiciously dropped. But that night Betty's mother was startled by her including "pore Devil" in her prayers, "because it *rarely* wasn't his fault, dear God—you see he wasn't ever christened when he was lickle."

"Why do such ideas come into the child's head? Where do they come from?" groaned the poor mother. "I am sure she doesn't get them from her father or me."

. . . . .

But the difficulties which beset the path of Betty's would-be trainers did not end here.

Walking one day with her mother they passed a dilapidated old woman, who followed them, pouring out a piteous tale.

"Oh mother, do you hear what she says?" cried Betty, tugging at her mother's arm. "She's not had a morsel to eat since yesterday, and her son's dyin', and her dear little gran'son's starving!"

"There, you may give her that shilling," said her mother, not daring to suggest a doubt of the woeful history, for Betty's faith in her fellow-creatures was prompt and unwavering.

The old woman called down the blessing of Heaven on the "dear, kind leddy" and the "sweet little missie," who was "just an angel, that she was," and "the Lord 'ud reward her!"

"Her name is Mrs. Robert Macpherson, and it's her dear, dead daughter's husband what's dying," said Betty, as she overtook her mother and walked on for a little while lost in thought.

Presently she asked: "Jesus Christ was very

64 THE RISING GENERATION

kind to all the poor people when He lived here, wasn't he, mother ?"

"Yes, Betty dear ; He was always kind to every one, and especially to the poor and sick," her mother answered, half apprehensive as to what might be coming next.

"Yes, but He wasn't only just kind like givin' them a shilling ; He made them His *frens*, didn't He, mother ?"

"Yes, darling, He did make them His friends!" replied the mother slowly, feeling, she confessed afterwards, as though she and her child ought to change places.

"Then why don't *we* make frens with that poor old woman there, and ask her to come back to tea with us ?"

"Why—well, I will try and tell you, dear," said her mother. "I should be very glad to have that poor old woman to tea with me, but it is *she* who would not like it—she would only feel very miserable and uncomfortable if I asked her into the drawing-room. She is not accustomed to it, you see, and she would ever so much rather have the money and buy her

own tea, and enjoy it quietly in her own home. Do you see, my Betty?"

"Yes, mother dear."

The voice was sad and the "yes" lacked conviction; still Betty felt if this were really so, there was nothing more to be said. She took comfort in the thought that it was not her mother who drew back from the friendship. But the question long perplexed her, how came it there was no record of poor people feeling uncomfortable in having tea or supper with Jesus Christ? On the contrary, fishermen and all sorts of people seem to have been quite at home. Betty had seen pictures of them, convincingly real.

A few days later I was painting a certain Corisand border, for which the garden of Betty's home was renowned, while Betty herself flitted to and fro, when suddenly I heard voices in the drive close by.

An old woman, very feeble and woebegone, yet with a certain dignity redeeming the thin shabbiness of her clothes, and a small boy of sharp impish face, were deep in converse with Betty.



66 THE RISING GENERATION

"Bless you, my sweet little missie! Why, if it ain't the very selfsame little hangel I told yer about, Jackie—that it is!" The old woman's face lit up with a wan smile of recognition.

Betty replied joyfully.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you again, Mrs. Robert Macpherson! You must come in—do please come in with me," she said heartily. "Is this your little boy who was starving?" she turned with eager interest to Jackie.

"Yes, my dearie, that's Jackie! And it's 'is father that's ill. Please the Lord, 'e won't never get no better, I say; 'e's real bad to-day, 'e is!"

Mrs. Macpherson spoke with genuine cheerfulness.

"Why! Don't you want him to get better?" Betty's voice expressed wondering surprise.

"Na!" broke in the impish boy. "See, when 'e's sick 'e can't wack yer! 'E can on'y frow fings at yer, and yer can dodge 'em if yer sharp," he added confidently. "Gran an' me we prays the Lord 'e'll take 'im purty soon."

"There, little missie, 'ow can you onderstand! Bless yer sweet little hangel face! Me and

Jackie we'll just be goin' ; it ain't fer us to git talkin' to a blessed innercent like you ! " Mrs. Macpherson made a clutch at Jackie, but that nimble youth promptly dodged round Betty.

" Lemme alown. The little missie's got a brawnie fer me, aincer, missie ? Gran and me, we've not 'ad a bite the 'ole o' this blessed dye ! " He began to whimper, rubbing two grimy little fists into a pair of dry twinkling eyes.

" Oh, please don't go, Mrs. Robert Macpherson," entreated Betty. " Come with me and see my mother, both of you. She will be *so* glad. She did want you to come back with her the other day and have tea in the drawing-room ! " Betty looked up into the weather-beaten old face with her most beguiling smile.

" Lor' now, did she though ? " Mrs. Macpherson's surprise was quite unaffected. " Your ma mus' be a reel Christian leddy, that she mus', my dearie ! "

" Oh yes, she is ! " Betty agreed heartily. " She only didn't ask you before, 'cause she— " (Betty

## THE LATE REFORMATION

There was a certain hurt  
in the heart of the man who was  
a man of the world, a man of the  
world, a man of the world.

There was a certain hurt  
in the heart of the man who was  
a man of the world, a man of the  
world, a man of the world.

There was a certain hurt  
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There was a certain hurt  
in the heart of the man who was  
a man of the world, a man of the  
world, a man of the world.

"Oh, she will be sorry! But—" brightening with a happy thought. "I can give you tea just the same. Come in, Mrs. Robert Macpherson—please do come in."

Jackie needed no second invitation. Already he was hard at work on the tempting cakes.

But Mrs. Macpherson lingered uncertain on the threshold, gazing wistfully at the paradise within and its presiding angel. "Bless yer dear little 'eart, but are ye sure as the leddy 'ud find us welcome an she come upon us suddint?"

"Oh yes truly, indeed she would," Betty assured her. "Do you know my mother was afraid you would not be comfor'ble here, but I know I can make you quite comfor'ble—so do come in." And Betty, taking Mrs. Macpherson's withered old hand in her own tiny soft one, led her to a luxurious easy-chair near the tea-table, and installed her, with cushions at her back. A wondrous strange sensation to Mrs. Macpherson!

Jackie's instinct prompted him to prefer a standing posture—his eight years' experience

70 THE RISING GENERATION

of life having no doubt taught him that you never know when you may have to run.

The rapidity of his movements surprised even Betty.

"Oh, Jackie, you *can* eat fast!" she laughed; "can't he, Mrs. Macpherson?" The contents of two plates of bread and butter and cakes had vanished before she had finished creaming and sugaring her visitors' tea.

"Jackie, mind yer manners, ye limb!" cried his grandmother sternly; then apologetically to Betty—" 'is pore inside is as empty as my old pocket, that's the Lord's truth, missie, so you mus' excuse 'im, my dearie. For 'es a good lad is Jackie—the lars tuppence 'e earned off a gent 'oldin' 'is 'orse blest if 'e didn't buy 'is 'ole Gran a box o' corf lozengers. My corf is the very deuce at nights!" added Mrs. Macpherson, becoming quite genial and communicative under the combined influence of tea, cakes, and arm-chair. I had risen quietly and was looking in on the party through the trellis-work of leaves.

Betty turned from one guest to the other

with radiant satisfaction, refilling their cups before they were half empty and plying them with every variety of cake.

"I do hope you feel *quite* comfor'ble in our drawing-room?" she inquired of Mrs. Macpherson, as she took a small chair beside her friend.

"Bless 'er little 'eart—it's jus' like bein' in 'eaven—that's what it is!—I shall never forgit this to my dyin' day, never, that I shan't. And when I'm a-trampin' the roads sick and weary in me body, and hard and bitter in me soul, I'll jus' think back on you, my blessed little hangel, and the fine tea you giv' us with the lovin' pity a-shinin' all the while out o' them sweet eyes."

"Oh, but I don't want you to go a-trampin' the roads any more. I want you to come to tea here very often, so we can be frends—like Jesus Christ used to be frends, don't you know!"

I went back to my camp-stool feeling that for all in the world I would not disturb that tea-party.

"Is that my young friend Miss Betty I hear? Ah! there you are!" said a rousing voice, and crunching the gravel with firm, quick step, up strode the Reverend Percy Simpkins, vicar of St. Augustine-on-the-Hill, and walked in at the open window; the last person I felt whom Betty would have invited to join this particular tea-party.

"Dear me! Dear, dear me!" he exclaimed slowly, and surveyed the scene aghast.

Betty advanced with dignity.

"How do you do, Mr. Simikins. We are just havin' tea, and this is Mrs. Robert Macpherson and her dear little gran'son, who was very hungry—we was all very hungry!" added Betty, with a vague instinct that she must justify her friends to this visitor.

Mrs. Macpherson rose and commenced a series of agitated curtseys accompanied by voluble excuses and apologies; among other things she mentioned that her sister had washed for a clergyman for fifteen years, and that she herself had been to school, and was once reckoned quite a "scholard."

Strong as such bonds should have proved in drawing together the reverend gentleman and Mrs. Macpherson, Jackie for one placed no reliance in them. He made a prompt bolt for the window, and on being intercepted by the outstretched arm of Mr. Simpkins plunged his head into that gentleman's waistcoat in such professional style as to send him reeling and breathless on to the nearest sofa. I had left my painting for a moment to walk down and examine a clump of larkspur, and returned just in time to witness Jackie's dramatic exit.

"Jackie, come back, do come back," cried Betty in deep distress; then turning reproachfully to the panting vicar of St. Augustine's—

"Oh, you've frightened him away!" she cried.

"Frightened him away! I hope I have, the young rascal. He has nearly killed me! My dear child, what in the name of fortune was that ragamuffin doing in here? Surely your mamma is unaware that these people are in her drawing-room. She has been



taking us round the garden. Ah, here she comes with Mrs. Simpkins!"

Betty rushed out eagerly to meet her mother. I rose and joined the latter that I might smooth away any possible difficulties for Betty.

"Oh, mother, mother, I am so glad you've come! Jackie's gone—he was so frightened at Mr. Simikins he ran away, but Mrs. Robert Macpherson is in the drawing-room, and she's not a bit uncomfor'ble; we've been having tea jus' like you said you'd like her to!"

"What do you mean, Betty dear? I don't quite understand—do you, Camilla? . . . Who is Mrs. Robert Macpherson?"

"Oh, she's goin'—she's goin'!" cried Betty in sudden dismay, as she saw the figure of her friend emerge from the drawing-room and hobble away down the path to the gate.

Betty rushed after her, and with earnest entreaties prevailed on Mrs. Macpherson to wait till her mother and I came up. Mr. Simpkins remained behind explaining the situation at some length to his wondering wife, and wearing, I thought, a somewhat disconcerted air.

Mrs. Macpherson was terribly agitated, her lips trembled, tears of wounded pride stood in the poor dim old eyes.

Betty quickly gathered, however, from the short broken sentences and indignant denials that it was "all Mr. Simikins." The bitterest grievance seemed to be that he had demanded Mrs. Macpherson's name and address, and had spoken of sending the Charity Organisation Secretary to investigate the case.

Vestikate indeed ! Mrs. Robert Macpherson didn't want no curicks with their charity societies to come a "vestikatin" of her and hers ! She knew all about that sort ! Hadn't they got her took to the House once ! No, thank you, no more curicks for her !

Nothing either Betty or her mother could say would prevail on Mrs. Macpherson to delay her departure. She was respectful but firm on the point, and showed such nervous apprehension at the approach of the Reverend Simpkins and his wife, that Betty's mother forbore to press her further.

"Well, then, good-bye for to-day, Mrs. Mac-

76 THE RISING GENERATION

pherson," she said kindly ; "as you have left your address, Betty and I will hope to come and see you very soon."

"May God bless the darlin' child, and keep 'unger and 'eartache far from 'er, and may the Lord reward 'er for what she's done for me this day. Ah, leddy, it wasn't the fine tea and cakes, it was the love, it was jus' the love, bless 'er !"

Betty clasped the worn, toil-stained old hand in both her own. Tears brimmed in her own eyes, and her voice shook as she said—

"Good-bye, dear Mrs. Robert Macpherson. We'll come *very* soon to see you ; and I do hope Jackie's father will keep on bein' ill, so that he can't beat him any more ! I shall come very early to-morrow morning," she called after her friend as the gates closed behind her.

. . . . .

Next morning, while Betty's father and mother were at breakfast, the maid entered with a small parcel which she handed to her mistress, saying that a little boy had left it at the back door "for the little Miss," and then ran away as fast as he could.

It was a curiously shaped parcel, wrapped in a very grimy piece of notepaper, and tied with a bit of old shoe-lace. Betty brought it over to show me and see if it would prove any clue in tracing the sender.

On being opened, it had been found to contain three small sugar cakes, decidedly the worse for wear. And inside the paper were scrawled these words—

“Frum Mises Robert Macpherson with fond  
luv jaky as giv thes up e is Sorie e tukem  
unbeknown e his not a thef deer litul mis god  
Bless u im gorn to lunon wi jaky is pa is ded  
lars nite Thank the lord I giv a ron Strete to  
the curik so e Shudant find us wen e cum  
round.”

. . . . .  
Betty and I are still trying to find Mrs.  
Robert Macpherson, but the difficulty is that  
her name is Legion, and the Jackies are as the  
sand of the sea.  
. . . . .

## IV

### THE HEART OF A SOLDIER

THERE is one pathetic little figure which often passes my observatory window on the Green. The face is full of eager energy, a latent heat seems to pervade his whole being, but the little frail body which he swings along so rapidly between two crutches gives one the pitiful impression that would a broken sapling. The face speaks of such vitality, the fine wide brow and luminous eyes promise such splendid possibilities ; in what direction can all that force turn, suddenly dammed like a stream at the start ?

His parents are both dead. The Afridis killed one, and grief the other ; so the solitary little John was taken by his old grandparents three years ago to their house on the Green.

Since he was two years old, and now he is

ten, he has gone about with wooden legs, as he calls them. Sometimes he thinks he can remember running like other boys, very, very fast. It may be only a dream, however, one of his many good dreams which make him so look forward to the night. For at night he is always a soldier. Sometimes he is marching on foot, leading his men through narrow mountain defiles like his brave father (he was a D.S.O. with a gallant record) when the Afridis sprang upon him and overwhelmed the little band. But more often he is riding a noble war-horse and leading his men to victory; the roar of the cannon and hissing of bullets sweet in his ear as the song of nightingales. Or it is a forlorn hope, a desperate charge of Balacava. Or again, he is storming Delhi, and rushes madly through the gap after his hero of heroes, John Nicholson. But he is a soldier always, from the moment he lies down on his little camp bedstead to the moment he opens his eyes next morning. He begged so persistently to be allowed "a real, true camp-bed" that his "granny" gave way at last and removed

the much more comfortable one she had provided.

By day, however, John Arthur is only a little lame schoolboy at "Macnab's," where his friend Jack Willoughby also goes. He is so quiet he does not make many friends, though he gets on well with them all, having a certain quiet dignity and yet no suspicion of "side," a thing no honest British boy can put up with.

But on the days when the others play cricket, football, or run paper-chases, John Arthur hurries home, swinging himself along so fast you may know he has good reason for wishing to get there. Sometimes he calls in at the studio to get a book or talk of "the secret," but that is more often on Sunday, for if he has two or three good clear hours in the week, there is a better use for them than spending them in my studio or garden.

At the top of the house John has a playroom, and what he does in that playroom is "the secret." His grandparents think he "plays," and seeing that in spite of being quite alone he is always happy there, they

trouble no more about it, provided only that he abstains from going there on Sundays, which would be against old Colonel Arthur's principles.

But his school-fellows have more curiosity. "A rum chap, John Arthur," they say. "Always keen as mustard to scoot back to that fusty attic of his!" "Wonder what the dickens he does there all by himself! he could *read* in the garden, so it isn't that." "Beastly unsociable," is the general verdict, all attempts to follow him up to that mysterious playroom having met with blank failure. Jack was the only one who had even seen the playroom, and his report but heightened the mystery. There were bare boards and hardly any furniture, a big cupboard locked, some photographs on the walls, mostly of Generals, Jack thought, and some shelves filled with "rotten history books."

"'Spect he's got a skeleton or something jolly in that old cupboard," speculated Hinks, a red-haired boy with an inquisitive nose. "Or dynamite," suggested Shuttleworth major, whose



## 82 THE RISING GENERATION

mind was wholly given to explosives. Their boys' instinct told them young Arthur must have got hold of something good to absorb his interest that way, and if there was anything good they wished to cry "halves."

I was the only one to whom John told "the secret," and during the two years I have known it, it has become a bigger and bigger secret. I have helped, too, a little bit towards making it so, and sometimes as a reward I have been admitted to the "playroom"—was ever such a misnomer! It should be called the Battle-field, for on those bare boards are enacted all the fiercest and most famous battles in English history. Let there be no mistake on this score, the thing is done faithfully, historically, to the minutest detail in as far as is possible.

Inside that capacious cupboard Granny would tell you there are "toys." I can tell you, under my breath, there is the whole British army, at least those of its regiments most famous in the annals of war, besides legions of the "enemy," both cavalry and infantry.

There are tents for camping out, there are guns and waggons and ambulances, and all the trappings of war, bugles, standards, drums, &c., to say nothing of bricks for building fortresses and walls, and plenty of furze and heather for cover. Of ammunition in dried peas and powder-caps there is also a goodly store, constantly replenished by John Arthur's weekly pocket-money, for you can't have a battle raging hotly for two hours without expending a good deal of ammunition.

There are two distinct classes of fight. The historical, such as the battles of Cressy, Cullo-den, Waterloo, &c., sieges of Delhi, Sevastopol, &c.; and the Dream or Invention battles.

The first are carried out according to an account of the campaign taken from the histories and lives of military heroes, of which John has three long shelves full. His memory is extraordinary. He can recite page after page of a favourite historian, and knows by heart Macaulay's "Lays" and Aytoun's poems, besides most of Kipling's "Barrack-room Ballads," and every word of his last

## 84 THE RISING GENERATION

favourite Newbold's "Admirals All." Each battle stands distinct in his mind as some Meissonier picture.

The other class of battle, the "Dream" or "Invention," are commenced with the issue of the fights absolutely unknown beforehand. The same small hand loads the cannon and propels the armies for both sides with stern impartiality. The results of the conflict are recorded in a clear round hand in one of the big "battle-books" kept in that locked cupboard. There is the Battle of Dover, for instance, between the English and French, a large army who land by submarine train from Calais in the night; and the Siege of Berlin undertaken after the telegram to Kruger, which ended in the complete routing of the obstreperous telegram-sender, and his imprisonment in the Tower of London by his justly incensed grandmother. The note in the battle-book records that the Germans far outnumbered the British both in men and guns; but as a set-off against this, the latter had Lord Roberts (the winding-up General, *i.e.* with a spring wheel

inside him), and his energetic skirmishing among the solid ranks of Germans was their undoing.

The names of all English officers in these engagements are correct according to their rank and regiment, copied from the Army-list. K.C.B.'s, D.S.O's, and V.C.'s are awarded only when duly earned. "Some of those chaps try to come round me like they do the old War Office," says John, "but I just tell them to be blowed when they talk about being shoved ahead because their uncles are dukes and earls!" Those who die or are seriously wounded are noted down, and naturally no officer who has been killed in any of these battles can fight again under the same name. His body, however, after a military funeral may be handed over to a new man from the Army-list. The privates, being nameless, are allowed to return to life in the ordinary way, and after due honour done to their remains, rise and fight again until maimed beyond mending.

There is a most comfortable hospital managed by Florence Nightingale, a lady whose becoming uniform and face of admirable calm more than

## 86 THE RISING GENERATION

compensate for her lack of activity, and if a case should prove beyond her skill, or the Field-Marshal's treatment of tin tacks and gum arabic, it is removed to the Surgeon-General's headquarters on the Green.

These wounded soldiers were, in fact, the main reason for my being let into the secret. One day at the beginning of our acquaintance I was showing John some black-and-white sketches in the *Graphic*, done on the battlefield. John listened with sparkling eyes as I pointed out how one fine fellow dashed forward, his lance in his left hand, while his right hung helpless at his side, and another man, evidently shot in the back, was being lifted on to the horse of a comrade, while the bullets hailed about them both. Some remark about the wounded made John eye me thoughtfully.

"I expect you'd make a awfully good army doctor," he remarked suddenly. It was a most unexpected compliment, and though failing to see how I had revealed this hidden possibility I did not repudiate it.

"I am wanting a army doctor very badly

myself . . . I was wondering—" went on John Arthur, and then hesitated.

I looked down at the little lame figure by my side, and it was a moment before I could answer.

"Oh, you'll get stronger as you grow up. I don't think an army doctor—" but John interrupted me eagerly.

"Oh, it wasn't for my game leg, it was for my men!" Then he lowered his voice to the tone of a conspirator—"I'll tell you my great secret what no livin' soul knows if you'll promise faithfully never to tell anybody."

I promised faithfully; and then John told me all about the army and the battle-books and everything, and how there were cases in hospital in piteous plight with unmendable legs and heads lying beside them on their small camp-beds, and wheels in their insides which absolutely refused to go round.

Then and there I undertook the arduous post of army doctor on condition of being allowed to attend the great battles when able, and also of receiving the rank of Surgeon-General; for that I stipulated, having often

## 88 THE RISING GENERATION

observed what a point is made of military rank by my *confrères*.

Before we parted it was arranged I should attend a performance of the Battle of Waterloo, the 18th of June falling in a few days' time, and being, "by an awful piece of good luck," according to John Arthur, the anniversary also of his own birth. "It was Mummie's favourite battle too," he said.

John rarely mentions his mother, but he sleeps with her miniature under his pillow.

On arriving the famous 18th I was met in the hall by John and invited to the play-room, nominally to see his books and my own latest contribution of that morning, resplendent among them.

After mounting many steps we found ourselves at the top of the house, the last flight very creaky, a fact the advantage of which the Field-Marshal fully appreciated, guarding him, as he pointed out, against any sudden surprises.

"The housemaid comes to the box-room sometimes, but you see I can always hear the first step a way off, thanks to these good old

stairs." There were but two doors on the top floor, one that of the box-room, the other, which was now unlocked to admit me, that of the battle-room.

John Arthur installed me with much ceremony in the only chair. "This is the hilltop from which you watch the battle with field-glass," he explained. "I'm most awfully sorry there aren't any field-glasses. I tried to get Granny's opera ones for you ; but she says she can't have them meddled with," he added regretfully.

I assured him my sight was so long I should see if a drummer-boy lost a button two miles off.

The two armies were in full array on the floor, the cannon all ready loaded, and every man drawn up in line prepared for immediate action.

"In case you have forgotten," said the Field-Marshal, putting on his father's two precious medals, which he took from the cupboard, "p'raps I'd best explain one or two things.

"Napoleon's army is about eighty thousand



strong. Some day I hope I'll get a better show than this." He pointed apologetically to what appeared to me a vast army of tin and wooden soldiers. "He has sent off another thirty thousand under Marshal Grouchy to harass those Prussians he licked on the 16th, two days ago, under Blucher at Ligny, you remember? Same day as Wellington was licking Ney at Quatre Bras, you know. Awful fierce engagement! Both sides lost about five thousand men. Napoleon was in a funk Wellington would beat a retreat as he followed up with this army. But Wellington wasn't going to retreat, you bet, though that old German Blucher, falling back as he did, left the English flank uncovered. However, Blucher does some good business later on to-day as you'll see. He's in the cupboard with his lot at present—I want you to walk 'em out when I blow this bugle, as I'll have too much to do loading the guns. Here's old 'Boney,' see! It's a real good likeness too. When he came up and saw our fellers drawn up here in line (this is the forest of Soignies, and this the highroad to Brussels,

and over there's the farm of La Haye Sainte where the desperate tussle took place with Ney), he hollered out, 'I've got 'em!' awfully cock-sure 'cause he'd got heaps more guns and cavalry than we had. Here they are, you see, though naturally only a poor show to what were there. This General is D'Erlon—this one Ney—fine chaps both, and jolly hard to lick. You've got to watch them mostly. 'Boney' doesn't move so often, though he scoots off to Paris pretty quick at the last. Here's Wellington. Only half his force are English; the rest are just raw recruits, German and Belgium, and anything he could pick up—see? Here's the Guards, good chaps—and here's the Scots Greys, cut to bits, poor fellows, by those French Cuirassiers there. But I'll keep on telling you as the battle rages, for there's lots of things I've got to say 'cause unforshunately my soldiers can only stand and fall—they aren't mobile, you see. Some of the officers are, 'cause they're on wheels. I've got strings to pull them by, and, of course, Wellington and Napoleon can move. See, Wellington is a winding-up General:

92      THE RISING GENERATION

he can dash like mad. That's how he leads 'forlorn hopes.' You'll see how the enemy is mowed down before him! Napoleon's only got a string! But I do a lot of talking for him—it's his unflexible spirit keeps his soldiers' courage up. Now we'll begin: It's about eleven o'clock in the morning really, and the battle's got to rage till nightfall; only it can't," he sighed, "as we've got to go down to tea with Granny at half-past four, and now it's half-past three."

So the battle began! It was a wonderful sight indeed to see the little fellow on the floor, his crutches thrown on one side, the infirmities of the thin, frail scabbard which imprisoned this keenly flashing spirit clean forgotten for the moment. He was living through that memorable day in the past as vividly as any old soldier of Waterloo. He had gone through it all so often, to him it was more real than any day actually lived in his short life. While the small nervous hands busily moved among the two big armies loading and firing guns and pulling strings, he continued his graphic recital. Cheering on

first one side, then the other, commending, or when he thought necessary swearing in true military spirit.

And as I looked on, my eyes grew dim. At last the darkness fell; that is to say, it was announced as falling in spite of the bright June sun outside, for a gong sounded warning us Granny's tea was waiting.

So we picked up the dead and wounded, and the crutches, locked the cupboard, and went down slowly together.

"I'm awfully glad my name is John Arthur—Arthur's for Wellington, you see, and John for John Nicholson, splendidest fellow as ever lived! It makes a feller feel he's not right out of it, spite of these old wooden legs."

"You'll never be 'right out of it,' my little John Arthur," I said. "Remember your name always, and you too will be one of the heroes who love noble deeds and do them."

John's continual dread was lest "the other fellows" should discover "the secret." "They wouldn't understand a chap that's lame caring for soldiering, you see," he explained. "As it

94 THE RISING GENERATION

is, lots of them despise me 'cause I can't fight. They'd laugh if they knew; I'd have no peace. Oh, I know some of 'em are awful decent chaps, like Jack Willoughby, but not all, I can just tell you that." And I could guess by the shade that passed over his face something of what this fine, sensitive nature had already suffered in the rough little world of school. The *pot de fer*, and the *pot de terre*, it was the old fable again. And the *pots de fer* cannot help it, they bang against the poor little *pots de terre* as they jog alongside, cracking and chipping the fine porcelain quite unconsciously, for they themselves are neither scratched nor dented.

John would not tell even Jack Willoughby about "the secret." "He might let out without intending to. He thinks now that I'm reading all the time. He says I'm a rum chap—says he can't understand a fellow liking 'With Kitchener to Khartoum' better than 'The Mystery of a Hansom Cab.' But he never bothers like the rest of them."

I was sitting at my window one day last

spring, an idle pen between my fingers, thinking of no other than my little friend John Arthur, for I had just read a notice offering five guineas for the best essay on "Decisive English Victories," competitors to be under fourteen years of age. And as my thoughts were busy with the boy's possible future, tap, tap came the sound of his crutch. A moment more and a small face, drawn and white with misery, gazed up with a look like a cry. I sprang to the door; I think he would have fallen had I not half lifted him in.

"Don't speak for a minute, sonnie," I said. "Just lie down here, and I will lock the door, so that we can be quite quiet together. There, so." The crutches rolled on the floor, and the poor little body on the sofa shook with convulsive sobs. I stroked his wavy, dark hair. How his mother must have loved that little curl on his forehead.

Gradually he became calmer. "They know," he sobbed.

"Tell me about it."

"They all know—know about everything—

even my putting on Daddy's medals. I can never bear to look at them again—my soldiers, I mean—never, never."

It came out gradually—the whole story; such a tragedy to the poor little *pot de terre*, such a ripping joke to the hard little *pots de fer*.

Coming out of school they had formed a ring round him, and shouted, "Three cheers for the Duke of Wellington." One had offered him another medal, a pawnticket, to add to his collection; another had asked him how much were bullets at the grocer's this morning. He had felt giddy at first, then so furious he wanted to kill them every one, and this had made them worse. He had tried to hit them with his crutches and had fallen. Jack Willoughby had helped him up and sent them flying. Cowards they were, and cads. Oh yes, but they were right, he was a fool, a crazy fool. He, a cripple, to dream of battles and V.C.'s. The child's bitter laugh hurt like a knife. Heaven spare him the bitterness of other dreams that may come later. How can they avoid coming to this boy with the poet's eyes?"

Then I thought of the prize essay, and we had a long talk about it, and about writing other things too. Playing at battles, absorbing as it was, would not satisfy him always. A time was soon coming when he would put away all his soldiers and want something more. John Arthur listened, his big, sad, wondering eyes fixed intently on me. He was learning his first hard lesson in the mutability of all things human, and the chrysalis of childhood was being painfully pushed off by the stirring of new faculties, the wings which will later bear him up into the blue.

Afterwards I learnt from Jack Willoughby how the secret had leaked out.

That morning Hinks had whispered in class to Perkins, "The murder's out." "Which murder?" "Young Arthur's murder, o' course."

The news spread like wildfire while busy heads bent over Latin verse, apparently absorbed in wrestling with its difficulties.

The "bloomin' housemaid" who used to be at Colonel Arthur's had come to be the Hinks's "bloomin' housemaid." This was the next item



98      THE RISING GENERATION

circulated. This bloomin' housemaid had seen "the whole bloomin' show" through the key-hole, and it was her private opinion that young Arthur was going clean off his head "with thinking he was the Dook o' Wellington and other sech, blowing bugles and firing guns at hisself!"

Many other interesting details were given, which proved that the "bloomin' housemaid" must have stolen up the creaky stairs, shoeless more than once, in her curiosity to see what "the young gentleman was after."

Once out of class it was quickly arranged to spring a surprise on young Arthur; it would be such an awful joke to see his face when they closed in round him and gave three deafening cheers for the Duke of Wellington! Jack came up hearing the row, and seeing his friend, like a hunted stag driven to bay in their midst, he collared Hinks, shouting, "Let the chap alone, can't you, yer pack of cowardly sneaks." With the aid of Shuttleworth major he put them to flight, and John had then hurried off without telling him what was up. "He looked as pale

THE HEART OF A SOLDIER 99

as anything, but he said he wasn't a bit hurt. I wanted to go home with him, only he would not let me," said the kind-hearted Jack.

. . . . .  
This morning a glad voice called outside my window, "I've got it!" then shouted, "Cap'n, art thou sleepin' there below?"

I came to the window, and John Arthur held up a cheque for two guineas—the Competition Essay Prize! His first decisive Victory.

## V

### THE REVEREND FREDERICK

FREDERICK pays an annual visit to his Aunt Maria at Tudor House. They are a comical-looking pair, these two, as they walk across the Green together on their way to church, twice on Sundays and regularly every Wednesday morning.

Aunt Maria weighs at least sixteen stone, and is generally very hot and very red, poor dear, especially on her way back from St. Augustine's-on-the-Hill, for it is against Aunt Maria's principles to drive to church even on a rainy week-day. Frederick weighs about sixty pounds with his thickest boots on, and is very cool and very pale, and quite bewilderingly active both in mind and body, even after his second service on Sunday.

It had been settled at his christening that

## THE REVEREND FREDERICK 101

Frederick was to be a bishop. Aunt Maria, his godmother, after whose departed spouse he was named, expressed it as her wish that he should be brought up with this exalted destiny in view, and her wish, as a rich, childless widow, carried considerable weight.

Every year confirmed Aunt Maria in the wisdom of her decision. Fair, slight, straight-featured, with pure high brow like a young Angelico saint, and clear blue eyes which in moments of inspiration or indignation could flash with a steely light, he fulfilled his aunt's ideal of an ecclesiastical dignitary in the bud.

"That boy is cut out for a bishop," Aunt Maria had often observed to me.

One Sunday, walking home from church where they had been regaled with a sermon on Ananias and Sapphira, Frederick observed to his aunt in his thoughtful way—

"I fink God is very merciful to father, don't you, Auntie?"

"Why, my darling boy?" asked Aunt Maria in mild wonder.

"'Cause v'uver day, when Jackson drove

down ve wrong drive, father said, 'Deuce take the feller, I've told him fifty dozen times to go round v'uver way'; and the new gravel was only jus' put down ve day before, so he couldn't have said it *all* vose times, could he? Fancy if God had knocked 'im bang down dead like He did Annias and Sophia?—Jolly glad He didn't!" added Frederick, with a sigh of such genuine relief that his aunt checked the reprimand in readiness and tried instead to explain the total lack of similarity between the two cases.

"But—bofe is lies, isn't vey?" observed Frederick in conclusion. And Aunt Maria was left with the depressing sense of the futility of arguing with an embryo bishop.

Frederick is a great hand at "Nursery Church." Aunt Maria attributes this tendency to youthful piety and zeal, and was quite annoyed one day when I suggested that dramatic talent, added to a gorgeous gift of imagination, might account for it.

"My dear, I consider his sermons are marvellous for a child of six years old," she insisted,

and there I heartily agreed with her, having myself been present at a discourse of Frederick's shortly before at the Manor House.

Since the abrupt closure of the Manor House Theatre, no dramatic entertainment had been allowed to take place, and Frederick's suggestion of "Church" one rainy afternoon about a week later was welcomed with enthusiasm, even though he insisted on taking the rôle of preacher himself. To Fitz was allotted the part of a bishop with large cooking-sleeves, and an arm-chair in the chancel. Midge was clerk, with strict injunctions not to say "Amen" till the end of the sermon. It was a great concession on Frederick's part allowing even this humble office to one of the weaker sex. From his deeply rooted contempt and mistrust of "gurls" he might be a lineal descendant of St. Augustine.

This attitude of mind was curiously revealed as Frederick and I took a short cut home through the churchyard. Passing under the dark yew branches that shaded the old moss-grown slabs of stone, Frederick's hand slipped quietly into mine.

"I suspose vey're all dead men lying under vese stones, aren't vey?" he inquired in a tone of fine indifference. I felt the small hand quiver involuntarily, and answered reassuringly that it was true their poor worn-out bodies did rest there, but there was nothing to fear more than from an old coat put aside and done with.

"Hum—yes—I know," said Frederick, hastening his step; "all ve same, I vish vey was 'gurls.'"

He felt that even as a ghost or a corpse he would scorn to fear a "gurl."

But to return to the "Nursery Service." "Gurls has no bizness to do anyfing in church 'cept say ver prayers, my faver says so," announced Frederick sternly to Sue, who had offered herself with thoughtless impulse as "parson."

"Girls can sing," she protested, after trying in vain to remember a lady in the pulpit.

"Vey sings in veir pews," conceded Frederick, "but vey never sings in ve choir with suppluses on—so vere!"

Sue, a mild-eyed little maid some two years

older than Frederick, but never constituted for the advancing of Woman's Cause, retired crushed. Midge, however, stepped into the gap with the air of a little *sans-culotte* battling for Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and demanded shrilly just who Master Frederick considered himself to be that he should come to other people's nurseries and order them all about "like he was cock o' the walk." "Fitz is a bigger boy 'an you anyhow, and could easily knock you down with his little finger!" she added, with a master-stroke of feminine diplomacy, thereby ranging at all events one male creature on her side. The end of it was her election to the proud post of clerk.

The rest, Sue, Harold, Charles Edward, the baby, and the two nurses, consented to be "congregation." Uncle Dick and I were also enrolled to fill up the Manor pew!

Perched on a high chair, and robed majestically in the bath-sheet, Frederick gave forth his text in clear, uncompromising tones.

"In the book of Revolutions ye shall find vese selfsame words, my beloved brevren: 'Verily,



106 THE RISING GENERATION

verily, I say unto ye, all liars, and them what loves a lie, shall have veir portions in ve lake which burnef wiv fire and brimstones from Heaven frever an dever, Amen.'"

The text, supplied by Frederick's memory from last Sunday's service, had struck him as possessing great dramatic possibilities, and he had promptly stored it up for future use, while an old engraving of the fifteenth century Italian School, in the library at Tudor House, assisted him in giving local colour and detail to his subject.

Fixing a stern and piercing eye upon poor Charles Edward, as evidently the most susceptible of his congregation, Frederick proceeded to pile up the agony, till at last his grim picture of writhing sinners in cauldrons of boiling oil stirred ever and anon by blue and green devils with red-hot pitchforks, so wrought on the imagination, if not the conscience, of the two-year-old sinner, that at the emphatic climax, "Verily, verily, I say unto ye, vis same is what'll shorely happen to every one here present if ye don't mind!" he lifted up his voice in a pro-

longed howl of misery and terror. Tightly clutching Sue round the neck, he refused all consolation.

It was a most gratifying tribute to the preacher's eloquence, and as such Frederick took it, in spite of being ignominiously and abruptly dethroned from his pulpit by the indignant Nurse Mullins, and all the guests forced to descend to the drawing-room in order that peace might be restored to the nursery. From henceforth, declared his nurse, Charles Edward should be debarred both from Shakespeare and sermons. Intellectually and spiritually he might be the loser, but his night's rest should not be haunted by nightmares of Desdemona and devils.

When I returned Frederick to his aunt, and told her of the sermon and its results, far from feeling any misgivings, tears of joy and pride filled her pale blue eyes, and she repeated with additional fervour her favourite refrain —

“That boy is destined to be a bishop!”

Not long after this, however, poor Aunt Maria was forced, reluctantly and sorrowfully, to re-

linquish the high hopes she had cherished for her godson.

One morning on calling at Tudor House to finish a sketch in the garden, I found the whole establishment in a commotion.

Aunt Maria had lost her valuable opal ring, and there was a hue and cry throughout the house. She remembered distinctly having placed it in a small tortoiseshell tray on her dressing-table. In default of a jackdaw on the premises, the verdict was unanimous that Master Frederick was the culprit. He must have taken the ring to play with, and either dropped or hidden it. This ring had always excited his keenest interest. He called it "the Rainbow Ring," and often begged to be allowed to hold it and turn it about in the sun.

Every one hunted high and low, while Aunt Maria approached the suspected Frederick with the utmost caution, bearing in mind how a sudden panic will often hurry the most truthful of children into a lie.

Gently and warily she beguiled her unsuspecting nephew into her bedroom, then leading

him to the dressing-table asked insinuatingly, "Now where does Auntie's Rainbow Ring live? Who can find it?"

Frederick rose like a fish to the fly. Stretching out an eager hand towards a small tray, "I'll find it first," he cried, "'fore you do, Auntie, see if I don't!"

"That's a good boy," said Aunt Maria, delighted at her apparent success; "now show Auntie where the ring is."

Frederick's face fell. "No, vat's not ve game—you've got to look too," he said sturdily.

"Ah," thought Aunt Maria, "he knows where it is, but must be allowed to find it in his own way." "Very well, Auntie will look too," she said. "Now see, a little while ago Rainbow Ring was resting on this little tray, was he not?"

"Yes, just sleeping awhile in his big four-post bed!" cried Frederick. "Or no," he corrected, giving rein to his fancy, "he was sailing in his boat on ve foaming white sea!"

"Well, well, just whichever you like." Aunt Maria was willing to dispense with poetic similes. "So you thought how nice it would be to wake

up Rainbow Ring and make him flash in the sun, didn't you? He looks so lovely in the sun!"

"Oh, doesn't he just!" responded Frederick with enthusiasm. "He wakes up and laughs and twinkles all his bu'ful colours jus' like a soap bubble—mos' specially when you let 'im loose in ve garden!"

"Let him loose in the garden!" repeated Aunt Maria with a sinking heart. Then bracing herself to know the worst, "Show Auntie the place where you took Rainbow Ring in the garden, there's a good boy!"

"Come on!" cried Frederick cheerfully; "we'll have a reg'lar wild rainbow hunt!"

"You will show Auntie the very place," gasped Aunt Maria as she tried to keep pace with her active nephew.

"Course I will; we'll ferrit him out of his very most segret hidin'-place like ve hunting of ve Snark, you know!"

Without even pausing for her hat and sunshade, down the wide oak stairs, faster than she had ever gone before, followed Aunt Maria. Over the lawn, through the old rose garden and kitchen

## THE REVEREND FREDERICK III

garden, and so to the thick yew hedge, under whose shadow lay the special patch of ground put aside for Master Frederick.

"Hear vat frush? Know what he's saying?" asked Frederick with a knowing look.

Aunt Maria shook her head, and wondered whether it was wise to let children read fairy tales.

"He's tellin' us where to look, like ve bird did to Siegfried—'member? You can't understand, o' course, 'cause *you*'ve not tasted dragon's blood like me! Now take a spade and dig, hard as you can, Auntie."

Frederick himself set to work with vigour.

"Do you mean to say you've buried my ring in the ground?" asked Aunt Maria, for the moment surprised into sternness.

Frederick wavered uncertain.

"Now, tell the truth and don't talk any more nonsense. Try and remember what you did with the ring when you took it out of the tray."

"I don't fink I did nofin' partickler," said Frederick slowly, making a desperate effort to descend to the world of dull fact and disentangle

it from fiction and make-believe. But imagination absolutely refused to be dethroned by memory, and Frederick gave up the attempt with a puzzled shake of his head. It was always much easier for him to recall what had not happened.

"Well, never mind—you know it was here that Rainbow Ring was buried. Now can you tell me why he had to be buried?" asked the poor lady, hoping this question might beguile Frederick into an unwary confession of all.

"Why, 'cause, don't you see," and Frederick's whole face beamed with sudden inspiration, "he had to be planted out so as to grow into a real rainbow for ve sky!"

The resource her godson showed in evading a truthful answer staggered Aunt Maria. Could this fair innocent aspect conceal a false deceptive nature? Impossible! It must be only a child's way of telling her where the ring was concealed. So, with a resigned sigh, Aunt Maria took up a spade, and under Frederick's instructions set to work to dig up a row of newly planted geraniums, and carefully sift the mould,

## THE REVEREND FREDERICK 113

Frederick in high spirits challenging her to race him as to which could dig fastest.

The day was broiling hot. Seated in the shade I watched and wondered, and offered help which I was thankful was not accepted. Aunt Maria was not accustomed to digging and kneeling to sift mould. By the time she had been at this work a quarter of an hour, her face had assumed a deep purple hue. Finch, the gardener, passing by, paused with a look of stern disapproval at Frederick and wonder at his mistress.

"I told Master Frederick not to meddle with them there plants, m'lady. They was only struck yesterday, and I give 'em water myself fust thing this mornin'. 'E promised faithful if I let 'im 'ave 'em for 'is garden 'e'd let 'em be!"

Frederick dropped his spade in dismay. "Will it kill vem? Oh, Finch, I'm awfully sorry, I forgot!"

Aunt Maria rose with difficulty.

"Master Frederick is looking for a valuable ring, Finch, which I much fear has found its way out here" (she gave a meaning look at



Frederick); "so we are searching at the roots of these geraniums in case he may have let it fall in the ground."

"When did you say the ring was lost, m'lady?"

"Only this morning; I know I had it yesterday."

"Then it ain't out 'ere, m'lady," said Finch decisively, "for them plants was struck yesterday, and Master Frederick haven't been out in the garden this morning till now, 'ave yer, sir?"

"No, I've been carpenterin' in ve attics," said Frederick simply.

"Not been out here!" Aunt Maria groaned, but this was not the moment to express her feelings.

"Is my ring upstairs in the attics?" she asked searchingly.

Frederick, nothing loth for a change of scene, responded heartily, "Oh yes, 'course he's up vere, ve knowin' rascal. Come on, Auntie, let's run!"

"You run, and Auntie will follow!" Aunt Maria's voice had a tone of enforced cheerfulness.

## THE REVEREND FREDERICK 115

Frederick dashed on. Suddenly falling flat on his face, he lay motionless. Aunt Maria, puffing and panting with anxiety, stood over him. "Are you hurt, my darling boy?"

"Hush! Lie down and sniff!" said Frederick in a mysterious whisper. "We are on his track, shore enuff! I can scent him!" He jumped up and was off again before Aunt Maria could answer.

"Bless me! what extraordinary beings children are!" sighed the poor lady, as she followed, trying to keep in sight Frederick's flying heels. It was a severe mount to the attics, and the last steps not without peril to sixteen stone. But Aunt Maria's dauntless spirit accomplished finally even the crazy ladder which led to Frederick's workshop among the rafters. High and low among the lumber and cobwebs of many generations they sought the ring, but all in vain.

Then Frederick, feeling depression in the air, with fine tact suggested a new idea.

"Shall I tell you where he rarely and truly has got to?" he asked mysteriously.

Poor Aunt Maria assented feebly

"Why, under ve big four-post bed in your room—vat's where he is." Frederick's tone was so convincing, Aunt Maria believed herself in sight of truth at last.

"Are you sure it is there, Frederick? Now, my dear boy, do think before you speak," she begged plaintively.

"Yes, I'm shore he's hidden vere—I saw him go!" he added in a burst of confidence.

Slowly and cautiously Aunt Maria descended, very hot and tired, but keeping up bravely, believing the goal to be near at last.

Arrived in her room, Frederick crawled eagerly under the bed, calling on the "rascal ring" to "come out," and Aunt Maria to follow. In her desperate desire to recover her lost treasure, she endeavoured to do so, but her portly person stuck half-way, and while in this somewhat trying position for the dignified mistress of Tudor House, her maid's voice reached her faintly:

"If you please, my lady, may I speak to you?"  
(A little louder.) "If you please, my lady."

With a painful effort Aunt Maria emerged—gasping for breath, her cap on one side, her dress

disordered and dusty, a look of congested suffering on her face.

"I think this is the ring you were inquiring about, my lady! It was on the corner of the piano with this bracelet." And she handed her mistress the opal ring.

Then with a flash Aunt Maria remembered having taken off both ring and bracelet when sitting down to the piano the evening before.

"Frederick! Come out at once!" she cried sternly.

Frederick wriggled out, heels first.

"Ah, you've caught him, Auntie!" he shrieked with delight. "Well done. Oh, do give him to me."

"No, Frederick. Listen to me. I am very grieved to find that my little nephew has been telling me an untruth—many, many untruths," added Aunt Maria severely. Then, seeing Frederick's open-mouthed astonishment, she went on more gently, "Why did you tell Auntie you had buried her ring in the garden, and then taken it to the attics, and then put it under the bed?"

Frederick gazed at her blankly.

"Weren't *you* playin' at ve Rainbow Hunt?" he asked in deep disappointment.

Aunt Maria gave a little gasp. To enter into an explanation was beyond her powers. "Oh yes, I suppose I was," she stammered; "but Auntie is getting old" (it was the first time she had felt it), "and is rather tired," she added feebly. "Go and play in the garden now, there's a good boy."

Aunt Maria dropped down in her comfortable easy-chair in the verandah. Her eyes closed. Presently she opened them, and her gaze rested on the green sward, and a little figure dancing across in the sunshine. A tender look mingled with the deep perplexity in her face. A sigh escaped her as she thought of the "game" in which she had been called upon to play such an exhausting part. This child for whom she had formed such high hopes possessed apparently no sense of truth, or the value of facts, and yet it was evident he had no premeditated desire to tell lies. She confided to me how terribly puzzling and complicated she found

the problem. Poor Aunt Maria had never had children of her own, or been obliged to reckon with a poet's imagination. Whether the mill which ground together with such indiscriminate impartiality Bible stories, heathen mythology, Greek fables, and Grimm's fairies, would in the end turn out wholesome grain or useless chaff, she felt incompetent to decide. I tried to offer comfort by holding out every hope of an honourable and distinguished career in another direction, but it was poor consolation, and from that hour she has never been heard to express the hope that Frederick should one day be a bishop.

## VI

### A LORD OF CREATION

WHAT queer creatures men are, and Oh, how trying! A nice fright Peter gave me the other day and a nice jaunt. All for nothing too! He says it was entirely my own stupidity added to a riotous imagination. Let any impartial person be the judge.

After much debating Peter had accepted a pressing invitation from his Cousin Robert to stay at his place near Winchester. It was some years since they had met, but in their school and college days they had been great chums. Peter had spent many an exeat at Robert's home, and retained most pleasant recollections of a shady trout stream running through the grounds.

The day after Peter's departure for the Grange I received the following telegram :

"Wire to me immediately I am seriously ill come at once will explain reason later. PETER."

Naturally enough, I concluded Peter to be at the point of death. "Will explain reason later." His reason for dying, of course ; that was just like Peter, he always had such excellent reasons for everything. When Mrs. Staggs saw the telegram she insisted on coming with me. I did not want her at all, but when she threw her black silk apron over her head and sobbed aloud, what could I do ? After looking out the first train we could catch from London, I sent the sobbing Staggs to the post-office with my telegram, feeling the best thing for her was employment. "Am coming by train arriving at Winchester 6.26. Bringing Dr. Faulkner with me." For I was not going to trust Peter to any provincial doctor. Unfortunately, however, as I then thought, I was unable to get Dr. Faulkner to come down by that train ; he wired he would follow by the one three hours later.

That journey took ten years off my life. There was no gruesome accident that I did



not live through during those two hours. For any ordinary calamity, loss of a limb, even concussion of the brain, I knew Peter would never send such a telegram. It must be something simply unthinkable dreadful! Imagination took the bit between her teeth and dashed me up against first one and then another hideous possibility, till by the time we got to Winchester I was mentally bruised all over and in a state of high fever.

As the train drew up at the station my heart suddenly stood still. Stories of the Psychical Research Society flashed through my brain; for there was Peter (no one could possibly mistake Peter) standing on the platform, gazing in his half-absent way at the train as it passed. He was dead, of course! Had probably passed away at that very moment. Mrs. Staggs bent over me with an eau-de-Cologne bottle.

"Oh, here you are," cried a rousing voice; "your train is late—jump out, quick. Don't speak—take my arm. Good mercy, there's Staggy too! We've just got time to cross the bridge and catch the up-train to town."

I could not speak. It was Peter in the solid flesh, for I had hold of his arm. But Peter mad, stark staring mad, and was that really preferable to Peter dead? Anyhow, I reflected as we tore across to the other platform, better to have him up in town, the asylums down here would never do. I thanked Heaven the faithful Staggy was with me; we two together could prevent his throwing himself out of the window, which of course he would try to do in all the tunnels.

We bundled into the London train just as it was starting. I contrived to place Peter between Mrs. Staggs and myself so as to avoid his being near the windows. For the first quarter of an hour he seemed quite overcome by a violent fit of suppressed hysterical laughter. His whole body shook, but he made very little sound. Once or twice he tried to speak and failed. I began to feel it must be very irritating to live with a lunatic. At last he blurted out, "Where's old Pill Box?"

Mrs. Staggs at once produced a box of cough lozenges with the assurance that they had eased off the late Mr. Staggs at the last.

But I knew it was Peter's irreverent way of referring to Dr. Faulkner. His remembering my telegram was evidence that his brain had not entirely given way.

"Look here, Peter," I began sternly, "what is the meaning of this? I insist on an explanation. Did you or did you not send me this telegram?"

Peter looked me full in the face, and I knew then that, however crazy he might be, he was not yet positively mad. "I suppose it is one of your hideous jokes," I said, my feelings finding relief in extreme indignation. "Well, you'll find Dr. Faulkner doesn't take it as a joke; he's following in the next train."

"My dear girl," began Peter. "Don't, I beg of you—I've gone through a good deal myself, and I can't stand much more. We must stop poor old Faulkner. A wire will catch him *en route* perhaps. Now do listen——"

He took his telegram from my shaking hands. "Ah, I see it is all a matter of punctuation, I am always so careful on those points. You should not have imagined a full stop after

'immediately'; you see there is none. This telegram is a request that *you* will wire to me of *your* sudden illness."

"Explain your unheard-of conduct, if you please," I said shortly.

Peter's story lasted till we got up to Waterloo, and after hearing it I felt there was some excuse for his desire to cut short his visit, though none whatever for his shockingly expressed telegram.

It appeared that in Robert's letter of invitation there was a postscript, to which at the time Peter attached little importance: "Billy, your godson, is three years old now, and quite an important member of the family, I can tell you." With the inward reflection that "it would be queer to see old Bob with a kid, as he never could stand them at any price," he dismissed the subject, little realising all those few words implied.

On arriving at Winchester he expected to find Robert with a dog-cart waiting to drive him to the Grange. His letter had said he would be there, and Robert was usually punctual to

a fault. After waiting twenty minutes, just as Peter had arranged to take a fly, up drove Robert in hot haste.

"Awfully sorry, old chap! Fear I'm late," he cried; "business in the town delayed me."

Peter, of course, said it was no matter, in fact he had quite enjoyed gnashing his teeth for twenty minutes. He sprang up in the cart, the groom with his portmanteau at the back.

After the first greeting Peter noticed Robert seemed preoccupied.

"I say, old chap—hope you won't mind—" he stammered, "I must just drive round and pick up Billy at the toy-shop. I left him there, as he wasn't ready when I drove off for you. He—he insisted on coming to-day!"

"Sounds as if Mr. Billy had ideas of his own!" remarked Peter, secretly wondering whether *this* could be the "business" which had caused the twenty minutes' delay.

"By Jove, he has too! I can assure you, Peter, he's a most extraordinarily sharp child," rejoined the proud father gravely.

Peter glanced at him uneasily. Robert used not to be entirely deficient in a sense of humour. But there was no sign of any twinkle in the eye of Billy's father.

They drew up at the toy-shop. Robert jumped down and went in, reappearing soon after, his arms full of skipping-ropes and trumpets, which he laid at Peter's feet.

"Billy wouldn't have them wrapped up," he remarked.

"Is the great Billy buying up the shop?" asked Peter, trying to conceal his impatience.

"Oh, he is just coming," and the harassed father hurriedly returned to the shop.

Presently Peter heard an altercation; a pleasant mild voice reiterating "Good-bye, little sir—say good-bye, won't you?" followed by the prompt rejoinder in loud, uncompromising tones, "No—no, I say!" Then Billy hove in sight followed by his father. Peter describes him as a thick-set, sturdy youngster, with a look of bulldog determination pervading his whole person, from round bullet head to thick square-toed boots. An enormous

sailor hat bearing the inscription "H.M.S. Inflexible," struck Peter as singularly appropriate, as Billy advanced flourishing a long whip in one hand, and a tin trumpet in the other.

"Say howdydo to Cousin Peter," said his father, lifting him up to the back seat.

"No—no, I say," came the reply in stentorian notes, and Master Billy proceeded to climb over to the front seat, waving his trumpet threateningly and shouting :

"Git out o' Billy's pace, ugly man—git out, I say."

Robert attempted Peter's defence, and a lively discussion took place, which the latter watched with an extreme longing to give Master Billy "what for." But when he found Robert suggesting a feeble compromise that Billy should sit in front between them, he jumped down and left Billy in triumphant possession, preferring the back seat to such close quarters with his godson's big hat and square-toed boots.

The drive home was enlivened by the vari-

ous musical instruments Billy had purchased. Robert had formerly been very sensitive about horrible sounds, but not a word of protest did he raise. No doubt he considered it a lesser evil than having his horse struck with skipping-ropes, a practice which resulted in the horse plunging violently forward or sideways into the ditch.

Peter was not sorry when that drive came to an end. He made his way quickly to the drawing-room, more with a desire of escaping Billy than from eagerness to greet Mabel, against whom he felt no slight resentment for having brought this disturbing member into the family.

She received him, however, with a welcome so kind and hearty that he forgot Billy, and as they sat down to tea, talking and laughing over old times, he recovered his serenity. But, alas! not for long. Robert came in presently and informed them solemnly that Billy had gone upstairs to his tea, and at the mere mention of his name Mabel's manner changed. Peter felt he was nowhere. She inquired anxiously whether



Billy had enjoyed his drive? what he had bought? what he had said? &c., &c.

Peter attempted to turn the current by answering in a spirit of levity, but soon perceived that jokes with reference to Billy, however mild, were entirely unappreciated. A terrible depression seized him. It always does if Peter is in an uncongenial atmosphere. He promptly escaped to his room, and looked out the earliest train to town next day, determined when the morning post arrived to announce that important business obliged his leaving at once. A silly resolve to make before he had been half-an-hour in the house, but just like Peter.

Having decided this he felt better, and returned to the drawing-room. On opening the door an extraordinary sight met his view.

Stretched full length on the floor, their eyes tightly shut, were Robert and his wife. For two persons with stout, short figures it was a most trying position. Over them stood their son, whip in hand.

"Go 'way, man," he shouted sternly as Peter

appeared in the doorway and whistled. "Go 'way, I say." Then to the prostrate figures :

"On trus—Over—Git up—Quickmarsh!"

Cracking his whip, he trotted over to the window, both parents following with an apologetic laugh, "This is 'Billy's hour' ; he makes us play 'good dogs' every evening."

"How charmingly domestic," observed Peter.

Billy glared at him defiantly, but decided to leave him for the present and devote his attention to his "good dogs."

"Down!—Dead-dogs!" he shouted, and down with prompt obedience went father and mother. "Eyeshut!" cried the tyrant, and four eyes closed as though pulled by a string inside their heads.

Suddenly Peter, who had taken up a paper, felt a sharp sting across his face, and, "Go 'way, ugly man," cried his godson, preparing for a second onslaught.

He rose, and catching Billy by the belt, held him high over his head with one hand.

"Now, you young rascal, how do you like that?" he cried.

But before Peter could forestall him, Billy had seized his victim by the hair, and was clawing away with a ferocity and strength which caused Peter speedily to lower both his own head and the person of Master Billy, who meanwhile roared with the full force of his lungs, "Git out, ugly man, git out, I say."

The prostrate parents struggled up from the floor. "Come, be a good boy," said his mother, "or we won't play any more—do you hear?"

Peter had disentangled Billy's claws from his hair, and that young gentleman was now going for his shins with the square-toed boots.

"No—no, I say—Go 'way, ole Mab," answered her son, giving her a push.

Thereupon the father thought it his duty to interfere, and with feeble pomposity threatened to send Master Billy to bed if he didn't try and behave himself.

"Play 'orses zen!" stipulated Billy, and trotted off for the reins with which to harness his parent.

I can imagine just how Peter looked at the pair! Had any one told him three years ago

that the staid, sensible, middle-aged Robert would ever come to this pass, he would have laughed such an one to scorn.

All his life Robert had been punctilious, formal, disliked liberties being taken with him, had strong convictions concerning the prerogatives of man, and the complete subjection of women and children. After seven years of married life in strict accord with these principles, strange indeed was the Nemesis which had overtaken him. Few men, or women either, ever found themselves under the heel of a more tyrannical despot.

As for Mabel, her attitude is more easily understood. From her childhood she has been trained to unquestioning obedience to the lords of creation. Beginning life under two brothers and a father, all with singularly dominating dispositions, she walked at six-and-twenty, without even a flap of her well-clipped wings, into the matrimonial cage. That her son should follow in the wake of her other lords appeared to her only in accordance with a natural law. Peter says her fair placid face shone with com-

134 THE RISING GENERATION

placent motherly pride when she told him that Billy had such a "manly spirit"; she could do nothing with him even at twelve months old!

Peter remarked he would uncommonly like to tackle his manly spirit.

"Oh, but Peter, you don't know Billy. He's an unusually precocious child. I've whipped him, and so has his father, but he doesn't care a bit; he only hits us back. He's afraid of no one," said Billy's mother.

She took Peter round to visit his old haunts. As they neared the trout stream, to his dismay he saw the soft grassy banks of his dreams disfigured by a hideous fence running the whole length of the stream.

"Why, what's up here?" he cried.

"Oh, the fence!" said Mabel. "Well, you see we had to put that up on account of Billy. He likes rolling down the bank, and we can't stop him. He was nearly drowned once, and his nurse too trying to get him out."

"Then Bob can't fish here now?" asked Peter.

"No, not very well. He has to get leave and go a mile lower down, but he hasn't often time for that," sighed Mabel. Life is really very difficult when you wish to please everybody!

Peter, I regret to state, reflected that he would have let Billy drown daily before putting up that fence.

One thing was clear, the Grange was no place for him.

. . . . .  
The following morning Peter was roused out of a refreshing slumber by the sound which of all others rouses his keenest wrath and indignation. With a bewildered conviction that he must have awakened in a dingy London street, he rushed to the window. No, there was the garden, and the trout stream beyond glistening in the early morning sun. Yet that diabolical sound undoubtedly proceeded from a barrel-organ!

He listened, and perceived that the pestilential instrument was actually in the house! On looking at his watch he found it was 5.30.

136 THE RISING GENERATION

He opened his door with a determined idea of doing for that grinder, but not a soul was astir. The noise proceeded from the end of the passage, and was penetrating enough to rouse the dead, yet the household slept on as though it were their usual lullabye. Suddenly a light burst on him. "Billy! by all that's unholy!" he cried. "Billy it must be!"

He returned to his bed with a vague hope that before long the arm of the grinder would weary, and sleep again be granted him. But no such luck! Round and round went that hideous machine without pause or cessation till his distracted brain beat against the sides of his weary head, and from his soul he cursed Billy. At 6.30 he rang the bell violently.

After a time Morton appeared, somewhat injured.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I thought you said you'd be called at half-past seven o'clock, sir?" said he.

"Yes," said Peter, feeling a keen desire to pitch into some one, "but I didn't know I was going to be awakened at 5.30 by that infernal

row. Who in the world is permitted to disturb the whole house in that manner?"

"Oh, that is Master Billy's 'and-organ, sir," Morton informed him. "He always plays it every mornin' directly he wakes. We've all got used to it now, though I must own it disturbed me considerable the first weeks."

"Oh, he plays it every morning, does he? How does it work?" asked Peter, thoughts of murder in his heart.

"With an 'andle, sir. It's a large, cubber-some organ, and it's really wonderful how such a very young gentleman can go on turning a weight like that by the hour as he does."

"Seems a remarkable young gentleman altogether! Do you think you could induce him to stop till I get out of doors?" asked Peter.

"Me, sir?" (Morton looked aghast at the mere suggestion.) "Bless you, sir, he wouldn't stop for me, nor anybody else if he's a mind to go on—least of all if 'e thought you wanted him to! He's a wonderful determined way of his own has Master Billy!"

Grinding his teeth in impotent rage, Peter



## 138 THE RISING GENERATION

dressed with all possible despatch, while the dementing "grinding" so worked on his nerves that he smashed a large china jug and cut his chin with the razor. It was with feelings of a released convict that he escaped to the garden at last. There is nothing like a garden for restoring jarred nerves and righting the balance of things awry.

At nine o'clock he went in to breakfast, feeling calm, and even cheerful, as he thought of the 11.30 train up to town.

But the fates were against him. The morning post arrived and brought no letters for him. It was not my fault, there had been none to forward, but Peter owns his thoughts were not kindly towards me. The important call to London must therefore come by other means. It was then he determined on sending me the following ambiguous telegram: "Wire to me immediately I am seriously ill come at once will explain reasons later."

He inquired for the nearest post-office, as he must send off a wire as soon as possible.

"Winchester is still the nearest. Is the affair

very pressing?" asked Robert sceptically. "Of course, if it is, we'll drive in this morning," he added, good-naturedly.

Feeling very guilty, Peter replied that he feared it was rather pressing, he ought to have remembered it yesterday. Suddenly something clawed him savagely by the leg. He kicked out vehemently. "Go 'way, ugly man, go 'way, I say," bawled a voice from under the table.

He drew his leg out, Billy still gripping him like a terrier.

"Oh, Billy, that's very naughty. I thought you had gone upstairs," expostulated that young gentleman's mother.

"No—no, I say," came promptly from her son.

"Go upstairs, you young rascal." His father seized him angrily by the collar and dragged him to the door. "Take him upstairs, Mab, can't you," he said peremptorily, Billy continuing to intone his long hoarse "No!"

Mabel made a feeble attempt to carry out the order, Billy kicking and hitting out till they got to the stairs. Then she gave it up,

and Billy reappeared, announcing gruffly, "I'se good."

"Well, behave yourself and you can stay," said his father, giving in at once. Then he turned to his wife, of whom he was not afraid: "Why on earth couldn't you take him upstairs as I told you, Mab?"

"Well, Robert, I tried to, but he has so much spirit," said poor Mabel feebly. "Hasn't he, Peter?" she appealed pathetically.

Peter replied that at the lowest computation he should judge Billy to be possessed of seven spirits, a remark which made Billy's father look up sharply; but a shrill blast from Mr. Billy's tin trumpet right in his poor mother's ear stopped whatever rejoinder was on Robert's lips. As Billy advanced to perform the same little office on Peter's sensitive organ, he jumped up and, lighting a cigarette, stepped out on to the lawn.

. . . . .

An hour later Robert and Peter started in the dog-cart for Winchester. As they neared the park gates they saw a nurse and perambulator in the distance.

"There's Billy!" cried Billy's father as if he hadn't seen his hopeful son for a month at least.

"So he is," replied Peter, without, I fear, much enthusiasm, and whipping up the horse, he took care to pass Mr. Billy at a good brisk pace. He was seated in state, reins and whip in hand, driving his nurse, who was duly harnessed, in front of him.

As they passed he called out lustily: "Stop—stop, I say!"

Peter affected not to hear.

"He wants us to stop and pick him up—the young dog," said the fond parent, looking back regretfully.

"I want you to give me your advice about a dog," began Peter eagerly. "Do you know of a good breed of Irish terrier?"

Robert could never resist an opportunity for giving advice, and the artful Peter knew he was specially strong on the subject of dogs. Then and there he offered to drive over to a man famous for his terriers about eight miles distant. Peter chortled with satisfaction at the

hours of respite thus procured. True, he was in for buying a dog he did not really want, but as a means of escaping Billy for a whole three hours he regarded it as cheap.

. . . . .

There is only one person, according to Billy's mother, whose sense of humour is so deficient she fails to really appreciate Billy, and that is her aunt, Mrs. Dacres-Pott, a person whose opinion unfortunately is of some importance.

Her property, a fine one, is about ten miles from the Grange. Before Billy's arrival his parents had been heard to thank the Lord for those ten miles ; but since the advent of their son neither of them have been able to forget that Dacres Park is unentailed and Mrs. Dacres-Pott childless.

Later on that day Peter was looking over some old engravings with Mabel in her morning-room, Billy's attention for the moment engaged with the cat and the ink-bottle on the rug, when a carriage drove up to the house.

"There's my aunt coming to call," cried Billy's mother. "Oh, Peter, for heaven's sake

stay here with Billy and keep him out of the way till she's gone. The last time she came he unluckily called her 'an old toad.' She's not used to boys: her own son had no spirit, and died of fever in India. And Billy *will* call her 'Pott'—'ole Pott.' He never does say Mr. to any one, not even the Vicar, and he thinks the name 'Pott' a joke. He has such a sense of humour, has Billy, bless him!"

"All right, make your mind easy," laughed Peter, his own mind, however, anything but easy. Why had no answer come to his telegram? It never struck Peter that I might be lunching out—obvious probabilities never do strike Peter.

"It is no use sending him to Nurse," explained Billy's mother; "she won't be able to prevent him if he takes it into his head to come. So, for mercy's sake, keep him quiet at any cost. You won't mind if he kicks you and calls you names, dear Peter?"

Peter reassured her.

The instant Mabel left, Billy turned his

attention from inking the cat's white coat, and announced his intention of going upstairs. "All right," said Peter. "I'll come too." Billy vouchsafed no reply, but marching upstairs and down the passage, entered a large cheerful room, which at a glance proclaimed itself the great Billy's own lair. Peter turned the key of the door and put it in his pocket. Meanwhile Billy's energies were concentrated on a cupboard in the corner of the room. Mounting a high chair he stood on tiptoe, both hands outstretched towards a large jar on the top shelf, which, however, he failed to reach.

"You brazen young criminal," cried Peter, coming to his side.

"Gimme teacle-pot—Gimme, I say!" commanded Billy.

"You'll have to say 'please—kind Cousin Peter,'" said his godfather.

Billy measured him with his eye, then looked up at the jar.

"Pease, ole Pete," compromised Billy, with reluctant resignation to the inevitable.

As Peter lifted down the treacle-pot, his eye was arrested by the sight of a large square box with a projecting handle on one side.

"Hullo! See here, Billy!" he cried. "Wouldn't it be a fine joke to pour the treacle into the organ? Eh?"

Billy paused in his absorbing occupation of diving first one finger, then another, into the jar. After a moment's doubtful consideration the idea seemed to strike him with approval.

"I'se pour it in zen all by my own sef," he stipulated.

"Oh yes, to be sure," agreed Peter readily; "all by your own self, because you're such a clever boy!"

He opened the box and lifted the glass lid, and as Billy raised the jar and tilted in the long thick golden coil, for the first time since Peter had known him his austere countenance was illumined by a smile.

"Good sport, ain't it, Billy?" said Peter.

"Good 'port," echoed Billy, his eyes gleaming. They were becoming quite pals.

Peter closed the lid with a feeling of immense



satisfaction. He was ignorant of the precise effect of treacle upon musical instruments ; but he felt convinced that if Fate ordained he should pass another night at the Grange, it would not be a barrel-organ that disturbed his slumbers.

"I'se goin' now," announced Billy, thirsting for new fields of action.

Peter rose to the occasion. "See here !" he called. "Can you make a sailor's knot ? Bet you can't !"

Seizing a pile of skipping-ropes which lay on the floor, he began knotting them together.

Billy came near and watched.

"No—no, I say," he shouted, snatching at the loose end. "I'se do that ; gimme, gimme, I say !"

"You'll have to say, 'Please, Cousin Peter,' before I show you how to do it, Master Billy," Peter told him.

Billy's face hardened. He set his teeth and tried in vain to tie the ropes together at the handles.

"Do it, ole Pete," he growled at length.

Peter walked to the window and whistled.

"Do it, ole Pete—do it, I say!" in a louder tone. A pause; then furiously, "P'ease, ugly ole Peter!"

"'Kind Cousin Peter' would sound better, but as you said please, I'll let you off the rest," said Peter, making a virtue of necessity.

Billy proved a most apt pupil, and before long had managed to fix a string of ropes to the top knob of the chest of drawers, and was swarming up and down like a monkey. He seemed so absorbed in his new occupation that Peter rashly thought it would be safe to leave him for a few minutes while he went down to the library to get a book. He took the precaution of locking the door after him, and Billy raised no objections.

The library opened out of the drawing-room, and through the half-closed doors came the voices of Billy's mother and Mrs. Dacres-Pott.

Peter loses all notion of time and place when among books. He declares he had not been in the library five minutes (there is little doubt it was half-an-hour) when he was startled by

a piercing scream from the next room. He jumped up and went in.

The two ladies with blanched faces were pointing towards the window opening on to the lawn, and when he beheld the object which transfixed them, Peter confesses he experienced what Mrs. Staggs calls "a turn."

Dangling from the end of a rope, about seven feet from the ground, he saw a curious shapeless bundle, which wriggled violently, striking out a short leg here and there.

To spring forward and seize the suspended bundle was the work of an instant.

"No—no, I say," came the familiar chant in Billy's dulcet tones. "I'se goin' to jump!"

"No you ain't, my boy," cried Peter, wrenching the small claws from the skipping-rope and setting him down inside the room.

"Oh, Billy, how could you be so naughty!" cried his mother, mild complaint mingling with unspeakable relief; while Peter endeavoured to make the best of a bad business, and apologised in a hurried aside for his "criminal neglect."

Billy in the meantime, furious at having his jump spoilt, hacked away at him viciously.

"Easy, young man—easy before ladies," said Peter, turning his face about to his great-aunt, whom he had hitherto ignored.

"Say how d'ydo to Auntie, like a good boy," urged his mother.

But Billy appeared not to hear. Glaring fixedly at Mrs. Dacres-Pott, who was still suffering from the shock and fanning herself vigorously, he marched slowly round her. His silence, Peter saw, filled Mabel with apprehension. Billy was evidently wrestling with some forgotten train of thought.

"I'm afraid, Auntie," she said, "in the flurry of Billy's descent, I forgot to introduce my cousin. Peter, let me present you properly to my aunt, Mrs. Dacres-Pott." They bowed to each other ceremoniously.

"Pott—Pott!" shrieked Billy in grim triumph; "Go 'way, Pott." And, evading his mother's detaining hand, "Pott's a ugly ole toad!" he informed the company with terrible distinctness.

Mabel gave Peter a look, which said plainly, "Dacres Park is lost!"

It was an awful moment.

Mrs. Dacres-Pott rose. What she said he does not know, for at that moment Morton entered and handed him a yellow envelope, the contents of which claimed all his attention. It was my telegram.

Here was a lively complication!

Murmuring some excuse he hurried from the room. Hastily cramming everything into his portmanteau, he summoned Morton, and told him he had received news from his sister which obliged him to leave for town by the next train.

Robert was out, and not expected home till seven o'clock, so Morton ordered round the dog-cart at once.

Mrs. Dacres-Pott had departed when Peter went downstairs.

His adieux to Mabel were necessarily hurried. He says he noticed a decided coolness in her manner. Ordinary people would not have felt surprised, but Peter thinks women very unreasonable.

Billy was busy with a hammer on the piano.

"Good-bye, Billy," called out Peter, and fled.

"No—no, I say ; I'se comin' too," shouted his godson. But he had jumped into the cart and was half-way down the drive before Billy reached the front door.

The last thing to be heard was Billy's hoarse intoning, "No—no, I say," echoing far down the avenue.

Fortunately for Peter, we managed just to catch Dr. Faulkner at Waterloo. He was very nice about it all, and advised me in future never to pay the slightest attention to any telegram from Peter. "For he would never send one that was really necessary," said Dr. Faulkner, which shows how well he knows Peter's temperament.

Mrs. Staggs was terribly upset. Her "whole organisation was radically unstrung." She assured me she couldn't sleep for nights, "lying awake of a tremble, thinking what we would have done had Mr. Peter murdered us both in the tunnel." She insisted on giving him a special brain diet, phosphate in his food, fish

twice a day, &c. Peter, ignorant of her purpose, obediently took what she provided, and so, according to Mrs. Staggs, she and Providence mercifully warded off further seizures. She thanks Heaven we called in Dr. Faulkner before "It" got firm hold of his constitution. Mrs. Staggs is experienced in all manners of seizures as in every other department of knowledge. The late Mr. Staggs was liable to every variety of fit and attack. "For years he ebbed and flowed, did Staggs, but finally they took 'im in the spinal colonnade, and carried 'im right off at the last."

It is most extraordinary the number of complaints which combined to attack that unfortunate Staggs and carry him off at the last! They were evidently determined to have him on the other side.

But the worst consequence of that visit of Peter's is still to come, for the next day brought a letter from poor old Robert regretting Peter's sudden departure in the stiffest terms, and enclosing a paper which Morton said had been found on his dressing-table.

Oh, careless Peter! It was my telegram.

Now the only thing for us to do is to invite them all three, specially including "dear little Billy, of whom I have heard such a beguiling description," to come and stay here. It is a just retribution on Peter, but rather hard on Peter's sister.



## VII

### PETER (A SENSITIVE PLANT)

THOUGH Peter cannot be included in the Rising Generation, properly so-called, he is still "rising" in another sense, and I seize on that pretext for giving a characteristic little story of his childhood, though it is to be hoped he will never see it, he has such an unreasoning horror of reminiscences. But the fact is, his present actions keep them ever green. Who but a school-boy would have thought of pouring treacle into the musical-box! I don't believe Peter will ever be really sensible and grown-up, notwithstanding his power of impressing people (who don't know him) with his profound wisdom and staidness. I think it must be his hair! Like Samson and popular pianists, his strength lies in his locks, and his wise-professor appearance could be shorn off him by any Delilah whose scissors reduced him to the commonplace.

Few people have ever understood Peter, and that brings me back to one of my "reminiscences." He was not by nature a morose or ungrateful boy, but he often passed for one, not only because of a rooted antipathy to expressions of emotion of any kind (a prejudice he still retains), but also from sheer inability to give tongue to his thoughts and feelings. The thought of saying "thank you" for a happy evening would mar the most ideal entertainment, dog his steps like a spectre all through "Sir Roger" and "Blind Man's Buff," intruding its insidious poison into the very ice-creams and jellies, and the final moment at last arrived found him invariably unable to give utterance to a sound. In the case of gifts it was even worse; he dreaded them as he never dreaded any punishment.

One occasion stands out with terrible distinctness, a *Dies ira* indeed, though it began like a day on Olympus.

Peter and I were staying in Dumfriesshire with Aunt Priscilla and Uncle Gregory, always rather a formidable event, for they had no

children, and though the goodness of their hearts was unimpeachable, their sensitiveness in the matter of open doors, muddy boots, spotless garments, &c., made life a bit of a strain. There were compensations, however, in the form of a heather moor, a burn that danced through the garden, and a pony devoted to our service, which made it well worth living, that black day excepted which followed Aunt Priscilla's visit to the toy-shop at Dumfries.

The day dawned brightly enough. Nature spoke no warning note when on waking that sunny July morning we each found by our respective bedsides a present "with Aunt Priscilla's love and best wishes."

My shriek of delight greeted a blue china tea-set which realised my wildest dreams, while in the adjoining room Peter rubbed and blinked incredulous eyes at the sight of a tool-box fitted with all that the carpentering soul of boy could desire.

Making short work of our toilettes we rushed out into the garden, I in haste to give a tea-party, and Peter to try the strength of his new hammer on every substance he encountered.

Birds sang, bees hummed, a soft breeze shook the dew from the rose leaves. It was a good world, specially for two small people who had got their hearts' desire.

I was seated on the grass making tea for an exigeante though invisible company, and Peter busy hammering a row of shining tin tacks across the gravel path, when all at once he said in a strained and awful whisper—

"I say—we've got to thank her!"

"'Course we have," I answered as casually as I could, and then to divert his thoughts made him come and see why the teapot would not pour.

In the absorbing interest of poking the grass out of the spout Peter forgot the dread thing looming ahead, till the gong sounded summoning us to join the solemn row assembled for prayers in the hall. Then the cloud at first but the size of a man's hand began to grow and spread on Peter's horizon till his whole sky was darkened.

Uncle Gregory read slowly and emphatically. His voice sounded in the ears of Peter like the tramp of oncoming doom. Prayers over he

must (unless mercifully overtaken by sudden illness) thank Aunt Priscilla for the tool-box. But in what speech to fit the occasion? He racked his fevered brain in vain for words which should be worthy such a gift, yet not foolishly or femininely exaggerated. What was to be done? He looked sideways at me. I felt his troubled glance and fixed devout eyes on Uncle Gregory.

"There shall be wee-ping and gnashing of teeth," read Uncle Gregory with awesome emphasis. The words fell like a prophetic knell on Peter's foreboding spirit.

"Let us pray," continued my uncle; and we all promptly knelt. A moment after I felt a tug at my sleeve. I looked round in dismay at what I feared was on Peter's part an act of impious levity, but the expression of his face arrested my attention.

"What shall I say for the tool-box?" he whispered, but so hurriedly I did not catch the words.

"What did you say?" I replied, Peter declares in a voice like a brass trumpet.

But before he could repeat the question

Uncle Gregory turned with a sharp "Sch" which froze the marrow in our bones. I buried my face in my hands, and felt the very tips of my ears turn scarlet. And now they were all repeating the General Thanksgiving. Would that it could have offered some suggestion to poor Peter! In another moment we were all standing up, and his speech must be made.

But by this time Peter was incapable of any lucid idea. Round and round in his whirling brain circled the unending refrain "there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

He was still absorbed with this inner voice when that of Uncle Gregory summoned him abruptly to the outer world—

"Was it possible, children, that I heard you actually whispering during family worship?" he asked sternly. "I could scarcely believe my ears."

"It—wasn't Camilla—it was me," stammered Peter, nearly choking with the superhuman effort which his sense of honour imposed on him. I gave him an approving look, but hastened to say we were both very sorry, and

it was an accident that should not occur again. Experience had early taught me the advisability of repenting promptly both the sins I had and those I had not committed—especially the latter.

“Well, never let me hear you do such a thing again, sir,” said Uncle Richard, turning on poor Peter as though he had claimed the full blame in a spirit of boastful pride.

Meanwhile I had gone up to Aunt Priscilla and was pouring out my thanks heartily and spontaneously, little realising that by so doing I was filling the soul of Peter with envy and bitterness as he approached with lagging step and sinking heart.

“Well, and what has Peter got to say?” Aunt Priscilla greeted him encouragingly. But though speech after speech surged, he says, through his brain, not a sound could Peter utter.

“Oh, Peter liked his tool-box awfully,” I put in, trying to give him a helping hand. “Didn’t you?” I turned on him with a meaning look.

“Y—es,” came slowly and reluctantly from a choking throat.

"And is that all that Peter can find to say?"

Aunt Priscilla moved towards the breakfast-table with ruffling plumes.

"Say thank you," I whispered imploringly, for being a year and six months older than Peter, I felt horribly responsible for his manners.

"Oh, I don't wish for any thanks which don't come from the heart," observed Aunt Priscilla stiffly.

My whispers were generally heard by the wrong people.

In deepest gloom we all sat down to breakfast. I could see that Peter's porridge stuck like glue in his throat. Every time he looked up and met my eye I made imploring signs of "say thank you."

He responded by glaring at me fixedly, and when he felt no other eye was on him his lips formed the words "by-and-by"; for he had determined directly breakfast was over and the disturbing presence of Uncle Gregory removed, he would try and get through a speech of thanks to Aunt Priscilla, though brain and heart should burst with the effort. Slowly the time dragged



on. Suddenly Uncle Gregory, who had been absorbed in his newspaper, looked up.

"What in the world is the matter with Peter? —quarrelling with his bread and butter, eh?" he inquired, with a disapproving eye on the neglected porridge.

"I really don't know what is the matter with Peter," said Aunt Priscilla, regarding the culprit severely as he struggled to gulp down another spoonful. "I took some pains to bring him a present I thought would give him pleasure, but he has not even had the grace to say, 'Thank you.' I can but conclude he didn't like the tool-box."

This was too much for Peter's overstrung nerves. Was he not at that very moment composing an eloquent after-breakfast speech? And when as a last straw Uncle Gregory scrutinised him fixedly *over* his spectacles, Peter heaved up a great sob and dropt abruptly under the table.

"Come out at once, sir, and don't make a goose of yourself," called the voice of Uncle Gregory.

But the consciousness that he was making

a goose of himself in no way helped to deter Peter from the dismal occupation, and he was at last dismissed to the upper regions as an ill-conditioned youngster who had better stay in his room till he knew how to conduct himself better.

Peter retired precipitately, wishing himself dead, and hating everybody, including me, and everything, especially "that accursed tool-box."

Truly had it been prophesied, "weeping and gnashing of teeth!"

. . . . .  
Feeling sure that as soon as I could do so I would follow him into exile, Peter turned the key of his door, determined to drink to the dregs his cup of lonely misery.

His heart was filled with such bitterness against me for my odious command of language, that for a long time he let me stand outside imploring him in vain to open the door while he answered never a word. At last he condescended to say, in what he flattered himself was a very distant tone—

"You can go away. I'd much rather stay by myself, thank you."

Unluckily an obtrusive sob shook his voice, marring the effect of calm dignity he wished to convey.

"Listen, Peter," I said, "and please, please, don't be an ass. Aunt Priscilla is driving to the Muckle Barr Farm to fetch some of those dear little speckly chickens, and she says we may both come too if you're quick."

Now there was no spot on earth in Peter's estimation to compare with the Muckle Barr Farm. It was a six-mile drive up the glen, through sweet-scented pine-woods and alongside a dancing trout stream. The barn, the dairy, the wide, low kitchen, oak-panelled and red-tiled, the mysterious dark lofts haunted by owls and rats, and, it was whispered, by "a white leddy" also, made it an ideal place to children whose heads were cram full of witches and fairies and romantic brigands. An alluring picture flashed before Peter with my words, and his heart, which had bounded, sank heavily as he realised the sheer impossibility of accepting anything at the hands of Aunt Priscilla under the present condition of strained relations. To go

now and speak the tardy words would be to place himself in the category of abject beings whom Peter defined as "boot-lickers." (How little people change—he is just like that still !)

So there was no alternative but to answer in a cold and stilted voice, "I am sick of that drive to the Muckle Barr Farm, and I can't abide speckly chickens, thank you. You can go alone—go and enjoy yourself !"

"I can't wait longer, Camilla ! The carriage is ready. If Peter can't get the better of his sulks we must leave him," called Aunt Priscilla.

"You *are* an unkind boy—now I've got to go." I think the involuntary sob in my voice brought gloomy comfort to the exile. But when the carriage wheels died away in the distance, Peter suddenly felt that life was a hideous nightmare. Here he was, without having committed one act of conscious wilful sin, suffering all the penalties of the hardened criminal. His noblest motives and finest feelings misjudged, condemned by all. Aunt Priscilla thought him ungrateful, whereas his heart had been too full for words. Uncle

Gregory was convinced he had got out of bed full of sin and sulks, when as a matter of fact he had arisen with the joy of a young lark, a song of thanksgiving on his lips, which always took the form of whistling through his entire repertoire of hymn-tunes. Even I had believed him to be obstinate and cruel, while all the time he could hardly stop himself from flinging wide the door and tearing after "the machine" with a whoop of joy at the prospect of Muckle Barr Farm and the speckly chickens.

As the hours dragged on in lagging quarters, duly clanged out by the stable clock, Peter's mind swung to and fro between the alternatives of trudging back on foot to his home in the South, some eight hundred miles distant, and descending to the large bright playroom, there to pour out his woes on the sympathetic bosom of "Nurse Marget." The uncertainty of his reception at home caused him no little apprehension, but the other course savoured of such total abnegation of his prided big boyhood, that he decided finally to start for home at nightfall, carrying what he needed for the journey

in a brown-paper parcel. His portmanteau, he feared, would be too heavy even for a big boy of seven and a half.

In the engrossing occupation of packing, hunger and misery had been partially allayed, but with the sound of the returning carriage wheels they seized him with renewed vigour.

The gong for lunch sounded loud and insistent, but Peter, bearing in mind his disgrace and consequent grim resolve, braced himself sternly to withstand its summons. He would "bite no bit and sip no sup" in the house of the Macfaydins.

"Peter, come down to lunch at once," called Aunt Priscilla on her way downstairs.

Peter, famished as a blackbird after a week's frost, clenched his teeth and sat tight, feeling that to obey that summons would be to part with every shred of his tattered self-respect.

Aunt Priscilla did not call twice. Peter could picture to himself the cloud of displeasure on the lofty brow of his uncle.

Presently there was a low knock at the door, and the voice of Marget in confidential tones.

"Cum awa doon, laddie. Arm fair shamed at ye, that arm noo. Cum, there's a bonnie haggis smokin' hot fer ye."

No St. Antony in the wilderness ever suffered more sternly in withstanding the voice of the tempter than did poor starving Peter.

"It's very kind of you, Marget, but I'd rather not come down. I'm not at all hungry, and I'm perticklerly busy."

"Havers, laddie ; are ye sick ? Let me spier at ye."

Marget was getting really anxious. She had only just learnt how Peter had been a self-made prisoner all the morning.

"No, no, I'm not a bit ill, but, Marget"—and Peter came close to the keyhole—"I'll be terribly obliged to you if you'll get me a piece of strong cord."

"Weel, weel, laddie—gin ye'll be sober arl git ye the bit cord."

She went away and returned presently. "Whisht ! open the door, laddie. A've brocht ye a bite."

But Peter stood firm.

"No, thank you, Marget—I can't eat. Slide the cord under the door, please."

The cord was slipped under the door, and Marget left with a heavy heart. "Weel, weel, he mun bide till hunger gits the better o' dourness. Arm thinkin' they twa willna be fechtin lang," she murmured.

The feeling of exhilaration with which Peter had commenced his packing was fast being replaced by one of extreme dejection and emptiness. My bounding step an hour later was a welcome sound. This time Peter did not wait for me to knock. I burst in breathless, flinging glad arms about him.

"Oh, Peter," I cried, almost hysterical from emotion. "I'm so glad you're alive. I had a feeling that you'd be sure to be dead before I got upstairs! When Marget came in to say you wouldn't eat and wanted a piece of strong cord, of course I thought you were going to kill yourself like that boy Uncle Gregory read about in the paper. And I had to wait there sitting on thorns till Aunt Priscilla finished her last mouthful (how impatiently I watched her!)



and Uncle Gregory said grace. Here's two apples from the Muckle Barr Farm—the sort you like," I said, and wriggled two enormous apples out of a bulging pocket.

Peter set to work on them without delay, and though he kept silence awhile, I knew I was forgiven.

Desperate as he had felt, with humiliation Peter had to own that the dramatic remedy of suicide had never even suggested itself. He was ashamed to think how far short he had fallen of real tragedy as compared with William Henry Perkins of Upper Tooting, aged twelve, the boy in the newspaper.

My eye fell on Peter's packing preparations.

"What are you doin' with your clothes?" I asked anxiously.

"I'm goin' home. I can't stop here another day. She thinks I didn't like the tool-box."

"No, she doesn't. She says she's only waitin' for you to come down and behave like a little gentleman."

"A little gentleman!" Peter's voice rang with concentrated scorn. "A gentleman would

go straight home, and that's what I'm going to do—you needn't come if you don't like."

I saw he required judicious handling, so, like a true daughter of Eve, I began by declaring this to be a splendid idea of Peter's, and nothing would give me greater pleasure if it could only be managed. But I had only one shilling and threepence to contribute to the travelling expenses (Peter himself had ninepence), and there were eight hundred miles to get over! Did Peter feel up to the walk? Then before he had time to confess he did not, I slid in a new proposition, a brilliant idea of my own.

"Write Aunt Priscilla a letter and I will take it down to her."

It was mortifying to have to unpack the brown-paper knapsack in which he had taken such pride, but eight hundred miles were somewhat staggering with 9d. and 1s. 3d. as the entire family funds. On the other hand, my plan had points, for a letter could contain both his thanks and an explanation of his apparent ingratitude.

Not until half-past four was that letter finally signed, addressed, and sealed, an achievement not arrived at without terrible throes. Four compositions were in turn torn up and rejected, one because two sheets of paper had stuck together, and it was feared this wasteful act would divert Aunt Priscilla's attention from the contents, the rest on account of smudges, blotches, or words of doubtful spelling, of which there was not to be one—a counsel of perfection hard of attainment, for we had no dictionary, except Marget, and the ink-bottle upset twice during the performance. The following was completed at last, however, on an almost immaculate sheet of notepaper.

MY DEAR AUNT PRISCILLA,—I hope you are quite well. I hope Uncle Gregory is quite well. (I said it would not do to leave him out as he really was not half bad!) I hope you enjoyed your nice drive this morning. Thanks *most fearfully* for the tool-box. I do like it most *awfully*. I did say thank you inside of me at breckfirst (a long dispute over the spell-

ing of this word, Peter's argument carrying the day that it must end thus being the first meal) only there was a lump stoping the words coming out of my throte, and it was a most beastly feeling. So I hope youl excuse me of it as I am very sorry for the axident. With best love to all, I remain,—Your affectionate Nephew,

PETER.

I acted as postman, and before long returned bearing a large letter with a splendid red seal, my face about the same colour, Peter said. He was waiting on the stairs, and tore the letter out of my hand.

This was the reply:—

MY DEAR PETER,—I rejoice to learn that you like the tool-box. I feared from your prolonged silence on the subject that it did not meet with your approval. But that unpleasant sensation in the throat quite explains and excuses everything. I have had it myself as a child; it was stupid of me to have so forgotten it as not to guess it was that from

174 THE RISING GENERATION

which you were suffering. Think no more about it. Uncle Gregory is waiting to give you a lesson in making boxes with lids, so bring down the tool-box.

Tea is ready, and there is a large snow cake that wants to be eaten and a new-laid egg specially for you.—Your affectionate

AUNT PRISCILLA.

I have always loved Aunt Priscilla for that letter. It is quite yellow with age, but I have it still. Strange to think that Aunt Priscilla herself should have faded and passed away from this earth so long before that scrap of paper!

When we entered the drawing-room together, Peter and I both feeling rather nervous, Aunt Priscilla came forward and folded Peter in her arms as though he had been lost on the moor for a week. This gave us both another queer sort of feeling in the throat, till Uncle Gregory, who was playing the piano, struck up: "O Willie, we have missed you." Then we all joined in the chorus, and laughed as if we were at the Pantomime.

Peter *was* a queer little boy! And he is one still, the only difference being that he is now on a larger scale throughout. Mrs. Staggs, who, as an initiated widow, claims a knowledge at once profound and all-embracing of the entire "sect," assures me that when you get to "the fundamental roots of them" all men are children. In support of this theory she points to her experience of the late Mr. Staggs. He departed this life twenty years ago, and they were only united three short years, but the amount of wisdom accumulated during that period would fill volumes. She starts with the axiom, "All men's alike," and then proceeds with precepts such as—"Never trust 'em out of sight. The moment your back's turned get into mischief they will, sure as my name's Sarah Staggs." "And money! Lord above knows you can't trust 'em with money! Look at my pore 'usban.' Horfen and horfen 'ave I said to 'im, 'Staggs,' I've said, 'money drivels through your fingers like good advice off a duck's back.' 'E couldn't retaliate—'e'd only to reflex on past accurants.

Mr. Peter's a reflector of Staggs as you may say, hall over—sheds 'is warm underclothin' with them bitter searching winds just because the sun's out. That's what give Staggs 'is ultimatum death-blow as I've said to Mr. Peter times out of number." "No reason men 'aven't more than the babe unborn. An' then, first little tweak of pain and thinks their last hour's come. 'Lucky for you you ain't a woman,' horfen 'ave I said to Staggs!" "From the cradle to the grave you must keep yer eye on them, for they never deviate into the paths of sense, men don't."

## VIII

### THE BACKFISCH

NAN lives under the shadow of the same old grey cathedral which for twenty-three years has shielded the life of my Cousin Alice from all contact with the outer world, and like Alice she inhabits one of the big, old-fashioned, red brick houses set apart for the canons.

All Nan's surroundings belong to the past, teem with the past. The old trees, houses, and paving-stones, the peace and apartness of the dignified Close, seem, with irresistible insistence, to draw into subjection the inhabitants who settle within the magic circle. Even those not to the manner born, but coming here from the rushing fermenting outside world, take on before long the air of the Close, their very clothes and voices having in them something of deference to the past.



Nan, however, from the start resisted, or rather ignored, this subjugating past. She belonged to the present, even from the early days when she crawled energetically round the three-hundred-year-old nursery floor, and gazed with eager young eyes from the lattice windows at which so many past generations of little maidens had sat demurely sewing their seams.

Nan belonged not only to the present but to the future. All her thoughts and dreams rushed out beyond the quiet Close, beyond the sleepy stagnant cathedral town. She, like "the boys," was going out into the world to see and to do—some day!

Algy at Woolwich, Ned at Harrow, and Toby still a day-boy at a preparatory school near home, did their utmost to curb the adventurous ardour of their young sister. But Nan was about as easy to snub as a Texan colt taking his first canter across the prairie; a long-legged, loose-armed, gawky maiden of twelve summers, called by common consent of her three brothers "the Backfisch." To the German nickname itself (signifying hobble-

dehoy) she was grandly indifferent, but the taunting derisive tone in which it was not infrequently applied often led her to retaliate with the schoolroom furniture.

Her frocks were always too short, her boots muddy, her hair in a tangle. Also in the matter of breaking windows, overturning tables, and smashing china, Nan was conscious of a rather unusual record for one of her gentle sex. But as she pointed out to her father after upsetting his tea, "if you had the length of your arms and legs altered every fortnight, so that you never had time to get used to them, you'd begin knocking things over—see if you wouldn't, Daddy!"

"His Reverence encourages her," murmured her brethren among themselves; "he counteracts all our attempts at training her in the way she should go. It is culpable weakness."

And certainly the Backfisch could generally rely on support in the parental quarter. It was he alone who heard in the hushed seclusion of his sanctum all her schemes and dreams for the future. Sometimes he smiled,

more often trembled. And this Reverend Man of Peace, against all his pet traditions and theories, found himself supplementing his daughter's education with lessons in fencing, boxing, and target shooting.

"You see, Dad, if I take up exploration work, or Chinese missions, or anything along those lines, I must understand the art of self-defence in all its branches." And her father, recognising an extract from one of his own addresses, could not do less than agree to this wholly unexpected application of his "advice to young men." He was as proud of her success in an encounter against Toby with the foils, as Ned considered he ought to have been remorseful, at such an unfeminine display. When Ned understood the end in view he approved still less. "She'll never get married if she goes on like that," he prophesied gloomily, "and marriage is the only adequate reason for woman's existence."

His constant admonition that "the whole sex should keep in the background," and "forbear to encroach on the prerogatives of man,"

not infrequently wound up with the rending of garments and breaking of furniture. "I can't bear it any longer when Ned starts St. Paul, and he knows I can't," explained Nan in vehement self-defence. "I did try quoting 'Sesame and Lilies' at him, and that nice bit out of Kitty's Maeterlinck, but it wasn't a bit of good, he said they weren't the Bible, and the fire-irons were the only things that drowned him!"

"Why can't you be more like Kitty?" was a favourite taunt, and one pretty sure to get a "rise."

Kitty was sweet seventeen, fair, fresh, and trim, with a rose-leaf skin and crisp hair, which never got out of place. "A bandbox sort of a girl," Nan called her with a qualm of secret envy and admiration. She was not like Nan, able to fly about the country on a barebacked pony, or bicycle, with her feet up and her arms crossed, and she disliked the sound of a gun in her ear; but she could sing like a bird and dance like a fairy. Even Toby, Nan's most lenient critic, had been heard

to declare that "a fellow does like having a sister who is not merely a good sort, but who other fellows admire and are keen to dance with."

No one over fourteen was ever keen to dance twice with the Backfisch, for she trod on her partner's toes, and instead of being meekly guided by him, insisted on steering her own most erratic course. But Nan never lacked partners of a less critical age, whatever the game on hand.

During Aunt Sophia's first visit last year, however, a memorable occurrence showed the Backfisch to her brethren in an aspect which modified even Ned's contemptuous attitude, permanently raised Algy's estimate, and called forth Toby's unqualified admiration.

I happened to be visiting my relations at the time, painting some of the old gardens for which the Close is famous, and of all the gardens I found the most attractive that in which Nan's wild daring feet first learnt to run. The old dark cedars, the old iron-wrought gates, the deep dark hedges of clipped yew,

with the green paths of velvety grass running between—such a garden the spirits of the past must love to revisit, in the hush of twilight or the early dawn before the world awakes. An old-world peace and calm clings about the place, and no desecrating hand has dared to mar its beauty by any change or “improvements” for three centuries.

Sitting there, under the shadow of the great cedar or in a corner by the yew hedge, one finds a dozen pictures at one’s hand. Sometimes Nan, sometimes Algy, and even Ned, were fired with a desire to paint gardens too, and would sit at my elbow for hours at a time, sketch-book in hand, begging to be “shown the trick.”

Holidays were in full swing when the news of Aunt Sophia’s approaching visit was sprung upon them. Each one came to me for condolence.

Aunt Sophia was a new and unknown acquisition to the family. Her visit to the Close was looked forward to with dismay by the schoolroom—*i.e.* Ned, Toby, and the Back-

fisch, and with coldness by Algy and Kitty. She had been a widow, and the schoolroom decided that widows were objectionable and to be profoundly distrusted. Two years previously she had married their uncle, a judge in India, with an excellent appointment, thereby confirming the worst suspicions.

It was an unpardonable want of consideration that induced the parents, on hearing that this undesirable relation was in England, to invite her to the Close during the holidays without even consulting the schoolroom.

. . . . .

Aunt Sophia arrived. She was a tall, good-looking woman with a reserved stately manner and low even voice which Toby declared made him want to shout.

The verdict that evening in the schoolroom was distinctly unfavourable. She was likened successively to an iceberg, an oyster, and a wet-blanket.

Kitty put in the conciliating suggestion that perhaps the new aunt was shy, but this idea brought down on her the united jeers of the

company. "A widow shy!"—"Rot!"—"If it was anything it was 'side,' that's what it was!"

It was decided that she must be "frozen out." It would never do to have her spoiling the last remaining fortnight of the holidays. She was stiff, she should be confronted with manners of adamant and buckram. She was silent, the inmates of the schoolroom would be as talkative as a row of tombstones. Perhaps she would get tired of it before the end of the week!

One bright spot there was in this gloomy outlook, the parents and Aunt Sophia were to dine and sleep at Warrington Court, ten miles off, on Thursday. This would give a respite to overstrained nerves and corked-up feelings. The Backfisch and Toby drew up the programme, Ned vouchsafing a supercilious assent. A grand *kocherei* in the schoolroom, toffee, chocolate caramel, cocoanut cakes, was to be followed by a Rugby-rule bolster match over the front staircase, concluding with a champagne supper, the champagne labelled "orange," but none the less sparkling on that account. Algy



and Kitty were invited to descend from their pedestal of half-grown-ups, and as Toby poetically put it, "Be but a child again just for to-night." They agreed to do so on condition that I would join the party and "tone it up," as Algy flatteringly remarked.

The dismay may be imagined when all hopes of this festivity were shattered by Aunt Sophia's announcement at lunch that her cold was so bad she feared she must give up the idea of accompanying the Canon and her sister-in-law to Warrington.

Expressive telegrams flashed across the table from three pairs of indignant eyes.

But before the parents left, Aunt Sophia was committed as a sacred charge to her nephews and nieces, and the dejected schoolroom braced itself to face the inevitable. A deputation waited upon me under the cedar tree imploring me to come all the same and see them through with this dismal evening.

By way of compensation to Nan and Toby they were also invited to take part in the trying ordeal of dinner. They consented reluctantly ;

it was "a sheer waste of God's good gifts," said the Backfisch, in which light she regarded every day of respite from her resident instructress.

The function passed off better than we had anticipated. There was a certain restraint about the conversation, but it was not without interest of a lurid kind, mostly supplied by Ned, never easily silenced. After gruesome stories of burglars, he started murders. By a curious coincidence the criminals were generally widows, or became so before the end. I feared Aunt Sophia might notice this fact, but she neither flinched nor blushed, and even contributed some startling tales herself, in the quiet, even voice suitable at the bedside of a sick friend.

After dinner there was music. Aunt Sophia insisted on hearing Algy's banjo. She actually laughed, a little quiet chuckling laugh at some of the coster and nigger songs.

Her entertainers encouraged, soon joined heartily in the choruses, and "The Gaiety Girl" was going with such vigour that no one observed the door open and the solemn figure of Parkins enter announcing in funereal

tones, according to custom at the Close : "The 'all is lighted, sir."

He made this remark several times before any one became aware of his presence. Aunt Sophia was the first to notice him. "I think something is wanted," she said to Kitty. An electric shock went through the party.

"Prayers!" exclaimed Kitty. "Oh, but we're not going to have prayers to-night, Parkins."

"The master said, 'Everything to go on has usual,' miss. So the 'all is lighted and we are hall assembled," chanted Parkins.

Kitty turned to Aunt Sophia. "Will you read prayers, please?"

"Me? Oh no, my dear, on no account, thank you." Her tone was quite final. Kitty gave me an appealing look; I shook my head, sadly but firmly.

"Then, Algy, you must," said Kitty decisively.

But Algy was seized with a violent fit of coughing.

"I am awfully hoarse," he croaked. "I expect you'll have to read to-night, Kitty. What

the devil has the old fool sprung this on us for ?" he muttered aside.

"Oh don't, Algy," Kitty implored. "We must go through with it now. Do read, there's a dear boy—I always turn sea-sick if I try it. You'll be all right," she added encouragingly.

"Not with *her* there," muttered Algy. "Let Ned read," he suggested. But Ned had already disappeared promptly under the nearest table. Algy's eye sought him in vain. "He's gone, the bloomin' funk !" Then in an irate tone to Parkins : "All right—go on—we're coming."

Slowly and solemnly we all filed into the hall, where a row of servants, headed by the house-keeper in black silk apron and gold-rimmed spectacles, stood waiting. Parkins brought up the rear.

Never in my life had I felt such an overpowering desire to laugh. The effort to control it amounted to agony. Yet there was no mirth in my soul. On the contrary, as I looked at Algy standing at the desk hurriedly turning over the leaves of the large Bible, I shivered with a sense of oncoming disaster.

It seemed an eternity before the chaplain found his place. As some of his congregation rightly guessed, he was searching for the Psalm with only two verses, which had perversely vanished from the Bible. Recklessly he started at last without a glance of what lay ahead. After jerking out three verses he turned a page, to find to his dismay he had embarked on a Psalm of sixty-nine verses. A violent fit of coughing produced a sympathetic echo from Parkins. With an abrupt "Let us pray," suddenly Algy closed the book.

I noted he had turned the same ominous colour observable in bad sailors crossing the Channel. I glanced anxiously at Aunt Sophia. Her eyes were downcast, her face inexpressive as a mask.

All knelt. A deathly silence followed, broken only by the rapid turning of leaves. Then a hoarse imploring whisper, "Kitty"—a pause, then "Ned—Ned." It was horrible! I dared not look round—dared not even listen. I cast a meaning look at the down-bent head of Ned. Really he might come to the rescue! Ned who was always so ready to hold forth!

All at once there was a quick movement, and presently a clear high-pitched voice proceeded steadily through Bishop Blomfield's Family Prayers. It was the Backfisch! True, an attentive listener might have observed she was reading the prayer for Sunday morning. There were references to the rest of the past night and the duties of the Sabbath day upon which we were about to enter, but on she went dauntlessly, in firm strong accents which knew no gasping or wavering. She had not dared wait to find the right place lest Parkins with his well-known officiousness should come forward and undertake the office of chaplain himself, she afterwards explained.

Her cheeks flaming like sun-roasted apples, eyes round and shining, a look of terrible fixity of purpose on her youthful face, the Backfisch suggested a reincarnation of Judith, Hypatia, and Joan of Arc in one. Even when it came to pronouncing the blessing she never flinched, but dismissed her congregation with solemn dignity.

It was during these moments that the

family's estimate of the Backfisch underwent a marked change. Each one recognised in their several ways that in future she was a factor to be reckoned with, a force maybe to be relied on.

The housekeeper said afterwards she recalled to "memory lost and dear" a Methodist aunt who had been distinguished for precocious piety, while Parkins, waxing warm in praise, quoted the "Charge of the Light Brigade"—"hers but to do or die," &c., and regretted a courage so intrepid should be "lavished on one of the young ladies, to the detriment, as you might say, of the young gentlemen of the family."

How the return to the drawing-room was effected no one ever remembered.

I stumbled over something in the doorway. It was Toby rolling on the floor, his handkerchief stuffed in his mouth.

Algy, stretched on the sofa, his head resting on Nan's thin shoulder, emitted sounds suggesting a total breakdown, mental and physical, while the Backfisch rewarded herself by rifling

his pockets for that strictly forbidden fruit, cigarettes.

Kitty appeared at last, dazed and bewildered.

"What happened?" she asked, looking round anxiously. "I heard nothing after Algy called me. I daren't listen, so I stopped up my ears and shut my eyes. I've just found out I was kneeling alone in the empty hall!"

She bore with unusual humility the scathing remarks her conduct called forth. Astonishment obliterated all personal feeling on hearing by whom the family honour had been saved.

"You read prayers?" she gasped, gazing awestruck at the Backfisch. "I thought, of course, Aunt Sophia would come forward when Ned failed."

"Yes, by the way, Ned, old chap, how about your blooming prerogatives of man?" inquired Algy; "you didn't seem specially keen on 'em to-night—cooling off, eh?" Ned excused himself on the plea of being an agnostic, and the rôle of parson, therefore, not his line. He was cut short by Kitty inquiring anxiously, what had been done with Aunt Sophia?



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## 194 THE RISING GENERATION

Aly started up. "Jee'rusalem! where is she?" He turned to me—"She was next to you, wasn't she?—how did she take it? Did you notice?"

I found a voice at last to tell how I had seen her shoulders shaking ominously and heard convulsive sobs; more I could not say. Aly gave a long whistle.

"I saw her!" cried Toby, rising from the floor. "She was crying like a water-spout. She just scooted upstairs three steps at a time as if the devil was after her, and banged her door. O Lord! O Lord! it just finishes me to think of Parson Backfisch!" And he rolled again.

"Oh, she has gone upstairs to pack," groaned Mary. "She'll go away to-night, you'll see!"

The Backfisch was despatched to knock at the door of the outraged aunt.

In breathless anxiety we all listened at the foot of the stairs as Nan went up. Three knocks ~~repeated~~ answered; then to our relief the door opened and quickly shut again. A quarter of an hour, a bad one for us

downstairs, passed in ominous silence. At last Algy, unable longer to bear the strain, suggested a move. Like burglars intent on evil deed we silently stole upstairs. What was happening? Toby, his ear at the keyhole, whispered: "It's all right, it sounds like choking, but it is laughing." Presently the Backfisch was heard in vivid colours describing the joys of a bolster match, and a voice no one recognised replied:

"I have never seen one, I'm sorry to say, but it sounds delightful."

Whereupon Toby, forgetting he was not supposed to be taking part in the conversation, shouted with enthusiasm:

"Good! good!"

The door was flung open.

"Listening—the wretches!" cried the Backfisch scornfully.

It was a bran-new Aunt Sophia, with ruffled hair and twinkling eyes, who came forward.

"Oh, you dreadful children, come in, come in, all of you!" She included me as I brought up the rear. "You nearly caused me a fit of apoplexy, but don't leave me to die alone."

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"Let me see if I can find it for you,"  
said the man. "I'll be right back." He  
gave me an approving nod and shook my hand  
and he went.

"That's right, the man," said Kitty decisively.  
But Kitty was silent with a violent fit of  
coughing.

"I am awfully hoarse," he croaked. "I ex-  
pect you'll have to read to-night, Kitty. What

## THE BACKFISH

*the devil has the old fool sprung this for ?*" he muttered aside.

"Oh don't, Algy," Kitty implored, "go through with it now. Do read, there boy—I always turn sea-sick if I try to be all right," she added encouragingly.

"Not with *her* there," muttered Algy. Ned read," he suggested. But Ned had disappeared promptly under the nearest Algy's eye sought him in vain. "the bloomin' funk!" Then in an instant Parkins: "All right—go on—were you

Slowly and solemnly we all filed round where a row of servants, headed by the keeper in black silk apron and pince-nez spectacles, stood waiting. Parkins came the rear.

Never in my life had I felt such a power-  
ing desire to laugh. The effort to suppress it amounted to agony. Yet there was a calm in my soul. On the contrary, as Algy standing at the head of the first row, the leaves of the large Bible, I had a sense of oncoming disaster.

eight times in the pantomime as Little Bo-Peep, but never off the stage. He wrote her one of his desperate proposals, and she let him come round to her in the wings one afternoon. When he asked her to marry him, she said, "My ducky, I only wish I could! but I've a brute of a husband and five children, the eldest's about your size."

He only told Kitty of this six months later, when he was able to laugh at it as a youthful folly. But it was a cold douche, and depressed him dreadfully at the time. She had looked sixteen behind the footlights, and though he saw a difference on a closer view, a chivalrous enthusiasm carried him on to repeat the offer of his letter with fervour. Algy has his good points.

Since then his loves have been many and various, as his walls at Woolwich can testify, where the ladies crowd and hustle each other in a proximity that would turn their smiles to scowls could they see it. Never was a more thorough and devout lover—for the time being. Had his parents had an inkling

of the daughters-in-law who have been hanging over their unsuspecting heads for the last five years, they would certainly have sent him to Germany—to live in a family!

There was Flossie Follet, the organist's daughter, a dangerously emotional singer, of whom Kitty is half afraid still in spite of all that has happened since. Next came the curate's sister, a widow, of the sentimental, appealing type, old enough, Kitty says, to have been ashamed to trade on a boy's soft heart with her crocodile's tears. And only last Easter there was Gussie Walker, a girl in her twelfth season at least, whom he met at Lady Cardover's dance in Warwickshire during the Christmas holidays. He proposed to her the same evening in the conservatory, and gives as an explanation that the stephanotis went to his head. Kitty is of opinion that it was the inordinate dose of flattery with which Miss Walker is wont to bait her hook.

Fortunately he felt some misgiving, and confided in Kitty during one of the "Extras." Notwithstanding a very limited experience of

## THE RISING GENERATION

ballrooms and their inhabitants, Kitty declares she saw with half an eye that Gussie was the kind to snap up and hold on to anything, a regular "baby-snatcher." Such being the desperate situation, she resorted to a desperate remedy. People who have never had Algy for a brother might think it unscrupulous.

There were three Miss Walkers at that ball. "Algernon, there is but one course open to you," said his sister firmly: "you must now at once propose to each of the sisters."

When the last strains of the final galop died away at four o'clock A.M. Algernon found himself the accepted fiancé of three Miss Walkers. One of them had merely treated it as a joke, and with simple candour wrote him an account of the dénouement which took place as they brushed out their hair after the ball. But with the other two, as Kitty did not fail to point out, he had a narrow escape.

But the worst affair of all was this summer, when the family took a house near us on the river during Algy's Woolwich leave. The

lazy, drowsy water-life, hot August sun, and scent of the roses, made him no doubt more than usually susceptible. Also, this case was aggravated by the fact that George Bailey, a Woolwich friend of Algy's, fell a victim to the same enchantress, designated by Kitty a "hussy," and by Toby "a mere flapper." Her age just sixteen, her hair down her back, as Toby's appellation for her signifies, and a pair of the most impudent brown eyes ever set in a girl's head. Her abode, temporarily, "The Anglers," close by—much too close by, so Kitty found.

Algy picked her up, or rather she picked him up, coming through the lock and running her boat straight into his canoe. It was all her small brother's fault, she protested, and was "Oh, so dreadfully frightened." The small brother and a big dog acted as decoys, each according to circumstances. The big dog was used for Algy. He leaned out of the boat, and placing a large paw on Algy's arm, looked into his face with an expression which it can only be surmised he must have learned from his mistress.



"He won't bite; he's very friendly, aren't you, darling?" says that young person. To which Algy makes reply, patting the dog's head:

"He's a splendid fellow. I don't mind him a bit. I've three dogs of my own."

"Oh, have you?—I should love to see them."

"Well, if you would, I shall be taking them down for a swim at six o'clock this evening." &c., &c.

The friendship was in full bloom before the gates of the lock opened, and even an introduction next day to a very large overdressed mother did not serve as a frost. Kitty thought nothing of the affair at first. She had friends herself on the river, and her hands happened to be pretty full of her own private affairs just then. She regarded it as a harmless pastime till the rivalry between Algy and Bailey assumed a serious aspect, and their alternative fits of gloomy depression, absent-mindedness, and unnatural elation began to attract general attention. Even Algy's father remarked on it, but fortunately Kitty's explanation of the nervous

tension they were enduring while awaiting the Woolwich exam. lists was accepted as satisfactory. Ned and the Backfisch were away, but Toby fully grasped the situation, and so did Parkins ; nothing ever escapes his observant eye. He and Toby condoled with one another over the melancholy and unaccountable phenomena of a brilliant intelligence so woefully distraught. They took gloomy consolation in finding parallel cases in history: "Napoleon was an odd chap about women," remarked Toby, seated on the ledge of the pantry window ; "and so was Nelson, you know." "Very true, sir," rejoined Parkins thoughtfully ; "and the Bible, come to think of it, is full of that same infirmity of the great, as you may say. Look at Samson and the learned King Solomon. As I have observed to you before, sir, woman's a terrible snare, that's where it is." With which sentiment Toby owned to me he had heartily concurred, though confessing at the same time that, had only the objects of Algernon's passion been more worthy of him, creatures of radiant loveliness,

royal birth, colossal fortune, or even brilliant talent, he might have felt differently about it. (As he did, for instance, about the razor, which, while an undoubted nuisance, was still an insignia of manhood.) But to reconcile himself to the total eclipse of reason which caused his gallant brother to lose heart and head to Rosie, Flossie, Gussie, or this little Flapper, was simply impossible.

During dinner both Algernon and Bailey would sit perfectly silent, the one in favour with an expression of imbecile rapture, the other of black despondency. Kitty spoke to Algy seriously at last, and warned him of the danger he ran of betraying himself.

He replied that he had got past caring for any such paltry considerations ; that Kitty herself, being incapable of a great passionate love like his, was necessarily unable to enter into his feelings. He reproached her with a nationality northern and cold. "We were born in the same place and of the same parents," said Kitty under her breath. Algy, if he heard, scorned to notice it, and warned her tragi-

cally that if he was prevented from marrying this girl it would certainly kill him. He wished to heaven "Bailey would remove his obnoxious presence," he could not have believed any chap could show such a want of tact as to stay on under the circumstances. The fact was he was in love with the girl too, and was doing his level best to oust the man he called his friend !

The next day, however, he was equally anxious Bailey should stay, and pressed him to do so. "It is a sort of consolation to know another fellow is feeling as bad as you are," he explained ; "and she vows she only cares for him as my friend. It's me she has loved from the first."

"What first ?" asked Kitty. And then he told her of the meeting in the lock. The Siren's plan of campaign was to egg on one against the other. One day she would go out bicycling with Algy, George, and the small brother, who rejoiced in the name of Noël (pronounced by himself and family Nôle), starting with them but soon finding themselves alone. The next day she would be off before breakfast

for a day on the river with Nôle—and George ! The state of Algy's mind may be better pictured than described till the truant's late return. " Mr. Bailey had promised to give Nôle a lesson in punting, and Ma was afraid to let him go alone. He got tired, so we landed him and went on a bit, but never intended going so far—the day just slipped by," explained the Siren. " George (Mr. Bailey she meant) was so interesting, and read poetry *so* beautifully."

Scene of furious jealousy. Threats of satisfaction, a duel at early dawn. Fair damsel in seventh heaven, but postpones duel by promising to devote entire morrow to her one and only love, Algernon, and to allow him then and there to kiss the little curl behind her left ear as many times as he liked. " He omitted," says Kitty, " to mention how often he did like ! "

Kitty realised at last that this thing must not go on. The day of the regatta Algy had introduced her to his adored one, " the only girl he had ever really loved." The praise his sister bestowed upon the eyes and hair of his beloved, Algy considered both inadequate and half-hearted. Kitty

observed how the artful young person played off Algy and Bailey one against the other, and realised that if this tremendous incentive could only be removed there would be every chance of the ardour of both diminishing. It was at this crisis Kitty appealed to me for assistance and counsel. "That little minx pits one against the other," she explained. "I watched her at the regatta the other day ; but if one of them cooled off it's my belief the other would follow suit. Algy as usual swears he's never been really in love before, and if he's not allowed to marry her it will kill him ; but I wish some one would head off George Bailey and see the effect on Master Algy. I'm too busy myself. You don't feel like doing it, I suppose ?" she inquired tentatively.

"No, poor lamb," I made reply, "I've reached the age when one deals very tenderly with the young. But don't be disheartened," I urged, "Maimie Topliffe arrives this evening, and though she owns to nine-and-twenty, they say that to boys between eighteen and twenty-three she is absolutely fatal. I have been told she could stock a university, or rather a good-sized

lunatic asylum, with her victims of that tender age."

"Is she that American girl with green eyes and a retroussé nose, and real lace on the most stunning frocks?"

I assented, and added that she sang nigger songs to the banjo, and was also an extraordinarily successful palmist; these two accomplishments generally completed with those of tender years what her green eyes and tip-tilted nose began.

"Oh, I know that sort of palmistry," remarked Kitty a trifle bitterly; "I thought that frank manner covered a very deceitful nature—I'm not half sorry Will Egerton will be away. Oh, I know he *thinks* he can't see another girl when I'm there, but men are so weak I don't want him subjected to temptation just yet."

Kitty had not lived eighteen years even under the shadow of a cathedral without learning something about "mere man." She rejected my suggestion of allowing her mother to know about the affair, saying it would only worry her to no purpose.

"Algy always falls in love during the holidays," she declared. "If you knew what I've steered that boy through, the rocks and pitfalls!" And pondering some of the episodes in Algy's past, we both took heart of courage for the future.

"Bring your Miss Topliffe to the picnic tomorrow," urged Kitty. "You don't mind my saying I hate her, dear Camilla, but I believe she will settle George Bailey, and then we shall see the effect upon Master Algy!"

The unsuspecting Siren and her small brother accepted Kitty's kind invitation with pleasure, and we all met at the boathouse and started for the picnic next day a most cheery party. There was a passage of arms between Kitty and Maimie Topliffe for the possession of Peter and the punt, Kitty coming off triumphant owing to another passage of arms, more unobtrusive but none the less keen, between Mr. Bailey and little Jimmy Buxton, a Middy of seventeen, usually devoted to the service of Kitty, for the honour of sitting by the fair American. While Maimie's attention was



thus divided Kitty shoved off with Peter, leaving the rest of us to settle ourselves in the canoe and the "family coach," a double scull boat. Meanwhile the canoe, in which Mr. Bailey had carefully arranged cushions, glided off with Algy and his Siren before any one could look round, and Mr. Bailey had to content himself with the consciousness of the near proximity of the tip-tilted nose and green eyes in the bows of the family coach, while a flattering voice at his back sweetened toil as he pulled.

"If you men knew what a vury graceful exercise sculling is, you'd just want to go on all the time and never stop—not even for a drink."

"If some fair Hebe would hold the cup to our parched lips, you bet we wouldn't," replied Mr. Bailey, turning a shade more sun-burnt with pure pleasure. And again :

"I guess Mr. Bailey's gotten a whole chestful of prize cups stowed away somewhere ! I never saw any one with such a stroke except our Bob Pinkerton—the man who was champion for the States last year !"

"I say, you mustn't jeer at a fellow, you

know, when he's doing his best for you!" laughed Mr. Bailey.

We did not hear her answer, but it was reflected on his face. Poor Mr. Bailey! note the "for you!" Already he was conscious of rowing but one person among that boatload. Presently Maimie twanged her banjo and commenced a lazy humming. Was it only the sun's rays, or the soft nasal tones at his back, that sent such a ruddy glow over Mr. Bailey's neck and brow with the words—"I want you, my honey, I want you every minute. I want you my honey, yes I do." Again she sung the soft refrain, again and yet again; every time it seemed to me with more diabolical intent. A moment later Mr. Bailey caught a crab! He who had been compared to the champion stroke of the States! There was a shout of derisive laughter from the "Middy."

Directly we landed, Maimie and her victim, laden with cushions, strolled off to find a quiet spot where she could tell his fortune and character while lunch was being set out on the grass. Little Jimmy Buxton, who had insisted doggedly

on attaching himself to Maimie on the other side, was sent back to see if she had not dropped her handkerchief in the boat. After searching in vain, he announced the mortifying conviction that he didn't believe she had ever lost it at all.

When lunch was ready it was Algy who went to fetch those two, and he seemed quite eager to do so.

Afterwards we all dispersed for a couple of hours in the woods, and how it happened no one knew, but it is certain that Kitty and I suddenly espied a deserted little Siren sitting solitary under a big tree and pretending to be much interested in watching the ants. Something very akin to remorse gnawing at our consciences, we sat quietly down and watched the ants also. Nothing by the way is so inconsistent and unreliable in the way of a guide as that same overrated conscience. Here were Kitty and I who had obeyed but its behests, and yet could not have felt more uncomfortable if we had broken all the Ten Commandments.

We were actually sorry for the designing minx, for undoubtedly in her infantine way she was designing. But, after all, her chief object in life was a "lark," as many larks as possible, in fact. She confided to us something of her lively past. It appeared she was in the habit of changing schools very frequently, and as she owned to giving midnight smoking-parties in the garden of the last Establishment for Young Ladies, till one fatal night when the party was abruptly broken up at 1.30 A.M. by the head mistress in night wrapper, perhaps it was hardly surprising.

Her parents had now decided on sending her to school at "Bullone." Her mother said for two years, but she intended to be married before that time expired—at least she *had* intended—but now she did not really know that she would not prefer to die an old maid. She did not believe in love! Men were all alike!

I confessed I thought there was a certain lamentable similarity in certain respects, but the best way was not to be in a hurry, and to

## 214 THE RISING GENERATION

take a good long look round before you make a final selection.

"That's just what Ma says, if she hadn't married at sixteen she'd 'ave made a better match, but Pa says you'd better hurry up or you get left! . . . I can't abide American women," she added with sudden vehemence. Then fearing she had been rude—"Beg pardon, if she's a friend of yours."

On starting for the return voyage, behold Mr. Algy standing erect in possession of the punt, while Maimie reclined full length on Kitty's cushions! The path of the *deus ex machinâ* is more often strewn with thorns than roses.

"I'm awfully bad at sculling the 'family coach'—some one else will do it so much better," Algy explained in answer to Kitty's look, for she uttered not a word. And as they shoved off there was that unconscionable Maimie at it again:

"Waal, I guess it is just the most purfict thing on earth to lie back on soft cushions and be punted by a tall strong man who has really mastered the art! So few can do it.

Quite easy, you say? Like to teach me! Would you really? I'd just *love* to learn—and then as a reward I'll look at your hand and tell you all your faults."

She must have given him one of her green-eyed shots, for that foolish boy was looking down on her with a face like the rising sun.

Maimie had received no promptings from me; it was all spontaneous. I saw she hoped Peter was noting her successes. His indifference always piques her, it is so unintentional, as are also his attentions when she does succeed in working him up to showing any.

Mr. Bailey, in a state of gloomy depression only equalled by that of the little "minx," pushed off with her in the canoe, and that at my suggestion, for both were stepping into the "family coach" with the air of those who no longer care what evil befalls them. (This is in no way meant as a reflection on Peter's sculling!)

"I believe he would have preferred even me!" whispered Kitty. "I feel quite melted towards the forsaken mermaid!"

. . . . .

A week later the following letter, read by me in accordance with Algy's express desire, still further enlisted our sympathies with the enemy. It was dated the evening of the picnic.

" MIDNIGHT.

" DEAR ALGERNON,—Only a few short hours ago ' my dearest and my darling ' lover—now alas ! mine no longer. For this letter is to say farewell—all is now over between us. I wish it to be so. I still love you, and perhaps to my misfortune I shall do so all my life, but I feel that I should never be happy married to you. I am not up to your people, and you would be ashamed of me as your wife and soon go off with smarter girls like you did this afternoon. It is better to be miserable a short time than all our lives—though I should love to have seen you as a great General in your military uniform. There is one thing I wish to confess to you before closing this. I have never said anything except the truth to you about my people and everything else, but in one thing all the same I deceived you—I told you Pa kept a lot of

horses and carriages, and so he does, but it is because he is a big funeral furnisher at Fulham. I am sorry I ever mentioned about those horses, but I wanted you not to look down upon us as a family. All I said about loving you more than all the other lovers I ever had was true though. I can see now that I cared for you more than you did for me, though you did say my eyes were the most fetching you had ever seen, and that the little curl behind my ear made you want to kiss me even the first day we met in the lock. But doubtless you said the same to Miss Toplift this afternoon — and George Bailey too—but him I only cared for as your friend. Good-bye for ever, Algernon.—Believe me always, your faithful, true friend,

MILDRED."

Until Peter suggested it, I could not imagine Algernon's motive in desiring I should see this letter. But Peter said, Peter who never appears to see anything :

"Why, don't you see, he was bruised and bleeding from the wounds inflicted by the fair



and fatal Topcliffe" (N.B.—Three days after the picnic Maimie almost cut both Algy and George Bailey at a horse show where she had a pale young baronet in tow), "and since you had been a witness of his discomfiture in that quarter he wished you to be aware of his triumph in another. We men are constituted that way. If he was a bit older he'd flap back to his Flapper and get his broken wings mended."

Well, "there's a silver lining even to this cloud," as Mrs. Staggs said when her uncle died and left her £50. And the silver lining to Kitty's midsummer cloud is that Algy has for the moment extricated himself from all matrimonial engagements, even that to the limpet-like Flossie Follet. For he confessed that up to the time of the Siren's appearance on the scene he had continued a sort of subterranean engagement with her, not knowing how to reply when she wrote from Germany her steadfast intention of remaining faithful till death—" *Bis sum Tode.*" She put it in German, and it seemed to make him feel the deathly earnest of the situation. But the Siren of the lock would

brook no letters from Germany, still less with German phrases in them. "You must tell her the truth even if it kills her," declared that damsel firmly; "but it won't," she added out of the store of past experience. Together they had composed a letter in which Algy likened his case to that of Romeo, Flossie standing, inappropriately enough, for the "cruel fair" Rosaline, and the Siren Mildred for his twin soul, his final fate, Juliet! "Rosaline must forgive and forget him," he said, "and attribute his former sentiment for herself to temporary insanity."

So now for the moment Algy is absolutely free. Experience, however, teaches that there is no guarantee for the future, and though the family have returned to the comparative security of the Close, and Algy to that of Woolwich, it is to be feared there will be no settled peace for Kitty anywhere until Algy is safely married, "then if there is any worrying still to be done, it will be by some one else," says Kitty.

## X

### AN AMERICAN SCHOOL-GIRL

MISS MAIMIE HUNTER-TOPLIFFE rustled down on us one day in all her latest Paris frou-frous.

She came on Sunday so as to catch Peter. She says a breath of the Green air is worth a month of sea-breezes at Bar Harbour, and an hour of conversation with Peter and me (N.B.—She never lets us get in a word edge-ways!) acts like champagne on her intellectual faculties.

She tells Peter he is "just lovely," and that all he needs to make him "purfect" is three years' training in the hands of the American woman.

"You can fix most Englishmen in two years, but you'd need to have three, Mr. Socrates, to undo the work of this English sister of

yours. Such pampering and spoiling I never did see! When does she ever make you fetch and carry around? Why, I guess, unless she'd broken a limb, she'd get everything right away for herself before you'd so much as seen she wanted it! I'd like just to ship you to Noo York and have you made over—sift out that old loft of yours—guess there's a mighty lot of mildew and green mould up there with all your Greek and Arabic—and fix you up with a new outfit in good American grain."

But intellectual stimulus was not the principal object of Maimie's visit on this particular occasion. She had a young cousin whom she desired to land on us for two or three days (*i.e.* seven when it came to dates) the following week. "She arrives by the *Teutonic* to-morrow," said Maimie; "and I promised to have her visit me till Miss Tufnell's school, The Anthill, Slough, opens. But I *must* start for Vienna with the Tappins next week, and whatever I'm to do with Jule Brinker I don't know, unless you'll have pity on me and on her—just for two nights, my dear sweet Camilla! I'll bless

you to the end of eternity. Of course, if you can't have her, why she must go to school before it opens ; the German governess is there, and she'll be alone with her, poor child."

Remembering an occasion on which I had once spent a solitary week in my childhood with a very unsympathetic German governess (I wish my memory were not so acutely and awkwardly retentive at times), I promptly gave way, though nothing could have been more ill-timed, as we had promised to take in an uncle, aunt, and cousin for two nights just at that date, and where to stow another visitor would baffle even Mrs. Staggs, I knew. But in spite of this, I found myself weakly saying, "Oh no, send her here, we'll manage somehow, though we have visitors, but there is always the inn for an extra bedroom. She can't stay at school with the German governess, can she, Peter?"

Maimie turned to Peter, who was making faces at me over her shoulder, faces that indicated a good deal of mixed feeling at the thought of the American school-girl. Peter

says I'm always getting "let in," just from lack of resource and a habit of giving way to the impulse of the moment. He was saying all this when Maimie turned round on him with her most beguiling smile :

"She'll begin right away on you, Mr. Peter, her hand's well in. Oh, she's had a nice training for the Anthill, has Miss Jule ! She's about as much notion what she's in for as an eel before it's skinned. She's not coming over here to waste her time in education or any crank of that sort, I must tell you."

"Miss Tufnell's Anthill sounds pretty busy," remarked Peter.

"That's so, but Jule gave me to understand when I was with them in Cleveland last month that the craze she's gotten for an English school has no connection whatever with a thirst for knowledge. Her young brother Hamilton suggested she was going to Slough in order to cultivate King Edward near by, and he was not way off the right track either, for Jule allows she is going expressly to form desirable acquaintances for use in the future, like

Irene and Gladys Tappin, who were at this same school, though she says the Tappins were not in the real Marboro' House set—they were only asked to the Garden Party. Miss Jule aims for the top notch—right there—nothing lower for her."

"What do her respected parents feel on the subject?" inquired Peter.

"Mr. and Mrs. Oliver B. Brinker have never in all their experience of married life known what it is to be respected parents. They couldn't picture the sensation! All they attempt is to give satisfaction to their children, and it's a mighty hard job, I can tell you, specially since Jule became a leader of the 'Push.' Don't you know what the Push is, Mr. Peter? Land's sakes! What's the good of being a Professor, I'd like to know. Just listen to this—" And Maimie read the following extract from a Cleveland paper, which had come with her last night's mail :—

"We learn that Miss Juliet B. Brinker is about to take her departure for Europe, where



it is her intention for the next two years to attend Miss Tufnell's fashionable school in Berkshire, England, situated, so we understand, not far from the royal residence itself. Miss Juliet B. Brinker is one of Cleveland's most popular young ladies, and will be greatly missed by a numerous circle of friends and admirers, above all by that select coterie the 'Push,' an embryo of the New York 'Four Hundred,' whose members consist of young people of both sexes, not yet 'out' in Society, and among whom Miss Brinker has long figured as a prominent leader. We cordially wish her success and good luck in her new undertaking."

"Hamilton sent me that; the editor is a friend of his. It was in three fashionable papers."

"Go on," I said, thoroughly "intrigued" by this time, "tell us more about her." Maimie desired nothing better, and rattled on.

"It was all arranged, Jule was to travel to Europe with me. Her passage was booked on the *Majestic* and all, but she concluded to postpone her departure for another fortnight at the



last, in order to give a Farewell Sheet-and-Pillow-case ball to the 'Push.' She had been having farewell bicycle-parties, picnics, at-homes and dances every night for a month past, and quite a grand ball given in her honour by her best friend, Pearl Sparling, where they all went as 'grown-ups'—'decolty' gowns, if you please, and all the jewels they could pile on! Jule wore a Parus gown of mine, and had two proposals that evening. She didn't accept either but kept them both 'on the string,' did Miss Jule. One youth she sent off to Klondyke to pile up his everlasting fortune before he dares ask her again, the other discomfited swain she informed she couldn't be hurried any—she must look around first—*he* wasn't the only pebble on the beach!"

"Will I have to propose to her?" asked Peter anxiously.

"Oh, she will probably save you the trouble, unless you come on *vurry* fast; she's a practised hand, Mr. Peter. She's not pretty, but, as I heard her tell her friend Pearl Sparling, 'If you've got magnetism, my dear, you don't

need to have anything else except a well-cut frock!"

"Poor Mrs. Oliver B. Brinker!" I sighed.

"Poor Mr. Oliver B. Brinker!" echoed Peter.

"And poor Miss Tufnell of the Anthill, Slough," laughed Maimie Topliffe. "You should see the outfit she's bringing! Three Saratogas crammed; Consuelo Vanderbilt's trousseau wasn't in it, my dear! Poor Vernie Brinker just stands around at that telephone all day and most of the night transacting her daughter's business, issuing and counter-manding orders. A pile of dresses came from Madame Dubois' one day while I was there. 'Waal, Jule! if these skirts and waists aren't all silk-lined!' cried poor Vernie; 'thought you allowed some could be made on sateen?' 'Waal,' says Jule, 'I did so at furst, but I concluded to have 'em all silk-lined when I found you can't have a rustle without you've got a silk lining right against a silk petticoat. I just love a silk rustle, and I'm going to have it—all the time.' Not bad as a start in for the Anthill, eh?"

"How old is Miss Jule?" inquired Peter.

"Fifteen last birthday—Hamilton's ten—he's coming on nicely too. The only piece of maternal advice I ever heard poor Vernie Brinker dare offer either of these jew'ls of hers is, 'Have a good time while you're young,' and that's advice they'll take without her giving it, strikes me. Oliver himself is a *vurry* silent man. He's busy trying to make a pile, and every cent of it 'ull be needed, he knows that."

"I think I shall hand over this advanced young person to Peter, I don't feel up to her," I murmured.

"You're just the sweetest thing on earth," answered Maimie irrelevantly. "You've taken twenty tons of solid lead off my mind, and you, Mr. Peter, are a *purfeckly* lovely man! You may come along now and see me on board my train." And off rustled Maimie with Peter in tow like a funny little steam-tug with a big heavy barge. Peter did not return till late, as Maimie took him up to town with her. He says I let him in for it, by making no attempt

to rescue him, but the truth is he was quite unnerved by being called a "perfectly lovely man"; he is not used to that kind of flattery and it goes to his head.

Two days later Maimie found she must have three extra days in Paris, and hoped her "darling Camilla" would not mind Juliet coming a little sooner.

So it fell out that the uncle, aunt, and cousin arrived the same day as Miss Juliet B. Brinker and her Saratogas — not a combination one would have chosen. The Lechmeres are thoroughly nice, old-fashioned people, dignified and reposeful, like their own old-world garden with clipped yew hedges, grass paths, and sweet lavender and cabbage-roses.

My uncle is Canon of the dear old fast-asleep cathedral town where Nan lives. An American man or woman is to him as strange and unknown a being as would be a messenger from Mars or a wild cat from the prairies.

"Vurry pleased to make your acquaintance," was Jule's greeting to each of us in turn, including the venerable Canon, whose blue eyes

opened in gentle amazement. After giving minute directions about the Saratogas, she looked round with composure. "My! what a cunning little house! Ain't it quaint! Guess I'm goin' to have a good time here." And hooking her arm in mine, she marched into one room after another.

On arriving at Peter's den she announced her intention of spending most of her time there in future. "Land's sakes, what a mighty lot of books you've gotten, Mr. Socrates. (See, I know all about *you* from Maimie Topliffe!) I jus' love a lot of books around even if I can't read 'em all!" I saw Peter shudder involuntarily; his books are sacred. "And what a purfick dream of a yard," she cried, looking out into the garden. "And a sweet little bit of a river, all of your own too!"

"Ah yes," said Peter. "The Thames we call it."

"The Thames! Do tell! Why, you never mean to say that bit of a stream down there is the biggest thing you can do in the way

of rivers? My—what a doll's-house country this is! You should just see our Hudson River—and Missouri and Mississippi—why, they'd make you open your eyes some!"

At dinner Jule became a little more piano. I noticed the Lechmere atmosphere was affecting her visibly, like uncomfortably rarefied air when the balloon soars beyond our accustomed level. The gracious, dignified manners of our relations, a certain aloofness of mind, their topics of conversation tinged with an old-world Toryism, the very modulation of their voices, all combined to make poor Jule feel like a brand-new penny toy on a shelf of Crown Derby.

She resisted it bravely, however, and I did my best to help her, but I could see she was distinctly depressed when Peter and my uncle retired to the library after dinner to discuss some new find in Egyptian papyrus about which they were much excited, the Canon being a connoisseur.

Next morning at breakfast there was a pile of letters and papers addressed to Miss Juliet B. Brinker. She pounced upon them with a

joyful "My Amurican mail!" and eagerly tore open the newspaper.

"Is that a paper giving you home news?" asked my uncle kindly, as he noted her eagerly scanning eyes.

"Why, yes—see, there's quite a long paragraph about me here," said Jule. Her cheeks flushed proudly. She was glad she could now show these dear good simple people, who persisted in treating her as a perfect child, what position she held in the city of Cleveland. "Perhaps it might interest you all to hear it?" she suggested.

"Do read it, my dear, by all means," said Mrs. Lechmere. "But tell me first, did you say that was an American newspaper?"

"Why, yes, this is our *Morning Advertiser*, first paper in Cleveland." Jule hoped they were all properly impressed.

"How exciting!" cried Alice Lechmere, her eyes twinkling with amusement. "Do begin, Juliet."

So Jule read her paragraph. She was much annoyed that the Canon in his absent-minded way resumed his *Guardian*, and seemed utterly

oblivious of everything else, and that Peter went off to town. But my aunt, her daughter, and I, gave our full attention.

“Miss Juliet B. Brinker sailed last Wednesday on s.s. *Teutonic* for England, in company with Miss Maimie Hunter-Topliffe, one of the belles of Cleveland, Ohio, and other friends. She took her departure from Cleveland Tuesday last on board the morning train to New York City, and was accompanied to the depôt by the following personal friends (here followed a long list of ladies' names). Nor was Miss Brinker neglected by the other sex, for notwithstanding the inconvenience of the hour the following gentlemen managed to appear, making up quite a regiment of cavaliers, whose tributes in the form of candy and bouquets nearly filled the car! Miss Brinker was accompanied as far as New York City by her mother, Mrs. Oliver B. Brinker, whose parting with her daughter was of a most affecting nature. Miss Brinker, we learn, however, bore up wonderfully through the trying scene, sus-



tained no doubt by the prospect of the new life of adventure and conquest upon which she is about to enter."

"Do the newspapers always give an account of girls going to school?" asked my aunt.

"You see," said Alice gently, "it is strange to us, because the newspapers we read are so clever and serious, they only put in what is of interest to men and politicians. I dare say this is much more amusing."

"I have not a doubt about it," I said encouragingly. "After all, those are the things that really interest most people, without their pretending."

So Jule was pacified, and rewarded us with an account of an "afternoon reception," given by a juvenile member of the "Push." This led to a description of the "Push" itself, which left poor Alice somewhat out of breath.

My aunt, too, was unable to show much enthusiasm, her motherly heart being greatly troubled at the idea of any young girl having "such a bringing up!"

Her anxiety for Jule was emphasised by a conversation she had with her shortly after on the subject of books. Juliet had grazed freely over a wide though somewhat arid field of fiction. She gazed with uplifted eyebrows when Alice said she had never been allowed to read the works of Zola, or even heard of d'Annunzio's "Victim," "Flame of Life," &c. Alice, who was three-and-twenty! At what age, Jule wondered, were girls supposed to quit childhood in this country! She, Jule, had read both these authors, and had a great deal to say on the subject of their interesting works had any one given her an opening.

"Tell me your favourite American authors," said my aunt. And Jule strung off a list of names to that gentle lady quite unknown.

"And Miss Alcott, and Miss Wilkins, now; do you like their writings?" she inquired.

"Oh, Miss Alcott's very well for young people," said Jule; "and Mary Wilkins, yes, she writes prettily enough, but somehow she doesn't *thrill* you, does she? I never could enthuse much over her myself. Tell you a

thing that thrills you—Clara Bonning-Piper's 'Lotus Leaves of Passion!' My! they touch the spot—right there! Then there's Maddison Phoenix, but I don't believe you'd like her work."

"Oh, why is that?" asked my aunt. I awaited the answer with apprehension.

"Waal—see, they're mostly vurry improper—not the kind of books you must ever say you've read, you know. Though, of course, every one reads them."

"Have *you* read them?"

"Yes, I've read two or three of them. Momma said they'd be too strong for my taste, and they wur, but I would see for myself—I hold with that, you know. But I concluded to quit readin' that kind of book, and I don't recommend them to you."

"What did you say was the name of this author?" asked my poor aunt, feeling uncertain whether to laugh or cry over this initiated child.

"Maddison Phoenix. Fancy now you not having heard of *her*! That's vurry remarkable!"

Alice Lechmere was engaged to be married to the curate of St. Augustine's-on-the-Hill. The only man with whom she had ever gone beyond the barest commonplaces. He was, in fact, the reason of their visit to our Cottage on the Green. It was in every way a suitable and satisfactory engagement. Alice was fair, fresh, and three-and-twenty ; the Reverend Charles Beauchamp was fair, fresh, and five-and-twenty, an excellent young man, though high and narrow as his own church steeple. A three years' engagement had tested their fidelity and found it immovable. Both belonged to that large class of Babes whom no wicked Uncle has ever lured into the Wood of this dangerous and beguiling world, those Babes who dwell on the outskirts in peaceful security till their golden heads turn grey. This is the prospect before the Reverend Charles Beauchamp and his bride-elect, for the Uncle in his story has just provided him with a pleasant and peaceful country living for which he is shortly to leave his curacy and settle down in

domestic bliss for the rest of his days. Thank heaven that still such lives are possible on this busy rushing planet of motor-cars and record-paces. It adds to the tremendous zest of contrast when one is borne by a swift Mercedes through the lanes of Surrey and Berkshire. What an awful world it will be when we are all on wheels or wings !

The Reverend Charles Beauchamp came to dinner the day after our guests' arrival. I was startled by suddenly hearing Juliet plunge head-long among the shoals of religious controversy, a suitable subject she no doubt thought to interest two parsons.

"Why, what's the matter with Unitarianism ?" was the first thing I heard. "You should see the fine Unitarian Chapels we've gotten over in America ! Some reckon they're a sight finer than all the other churches put together !"

"Ahem ! Are there many Unitarians in Cleveland ?" inquired my uncle, turning politely to Juliet and surveying her over his gold-rimmed spectacles, while Mr. Beauchamp started visibly as though at sudden sight of a cloven hoof.

"I guess there are," said Jules proudly. "Mamma says she'd as soon have to do with Unitarians as any. They're mostly an awfully good sort. I'm not crazy about any religions myself. I say it don't much matter what you go in for so long as you act fair and square!"

Jule enunciated this sentiment with the secure air of one who feels the house must be with her. She noticed, however, that no one seemed to respond, and concluded the subject had ceased to interest.

At my end of the table I discussed Wagner with great *empressement*. My aunt coughed nervously, and Mr. Beauchamp inquired suddenly whether the Canon had heard that the Bishop talked of resigning.

After dinner my uncle invited Juliet to take a little turn round the garden with him. I knew his fatherly heart was full of anxiety for the welfare of this little sheep apparently belonging to no fold but grazing in independent ignorance by the wayside. They seemed deep in converse for some time. I wondered which was learning most!

On Jule's reappearance in the drawing-room, my aunt inquired gently if she had had a nice talk?

"Oh vurry, thank you. We have been talking religion," said Jule cheerily. "And see what a cunning little book your husband has given me, Mrs. Lechmere."

That lady looked at the dainty little volume. It was Dean Goulburn's "Personal Religion."

"He read me a piece out of it, and talked a lot. I guess he had to do pretty nearly all the talking." (Juliet's tone was full of regret.) "You see I don't know enough about religion to argue with him!"

"Perhaps then, my dear, you could agree with him," suggested my aunt kindly.

"Waal—no—can't say I could—not all along the line, you know! Oh, I've heard ministers talk that way before, scores of 'em. But you mustn't think I'm anyway rattled by what he said—no, sir—not much. Why! I think he was just purfeckly sweet and lovely to me, givin' me the little book and all! Say! you're not feelin' mad because I don't

agree with your husband, are you, dear?" Jule inquired suddenly, observing Mrs. Lechmere's grave expression.

"Mad? Me?" cried that lady with a start. "Oh, angry, you mean. My poor dear child, no indeed. What a very singular idea!"

"Then guess I'll go and get my Beauty Book and show you all. Most people are tickled to death with it," and off she ran, leaving my poor aunt much bewildered.

Jule's Beauty Book, one of her greatest treasures, was a heterogeneous collection of professional Beauties of both sexes, mostly belonging to the dramatic profession. They were represented in every possible costume (or lack of costume!) and Jule could give a minute personal history of each distinguished artiste.

Much to her regret, Mr. Beauchamp rose to take leave just as she entered with her treasure.

"Thought you might have been interested in photographs," she said. "Waal, you shall



see them next time you come along. I wish you good evening. Vurry pleased to have made your acquaintance!" She held out her hand with frank friendliness, combined with a dignified condescension, which made the Reverend Charles Beauchamp feel about fifteen years old.

"Say, that Allus'es best young man?" inquired Jule, her eyes following Alice Lechmere and Mr. Beauchamp.

I laughed. "Yes, Juliet, the best and only one. She has been engaged to him nearly three years."

"Do tell!—fancy her being as stuck on him as all that, now! Say! wasn't it his Poppa made such a pile over the pills?"

"Over the pills?" I repeated in deep perplexity.

"Why, yes, 'Beecham's Pills' right enough, ain't they?"

Alice returned in time to hear the last remark, and Jule wondered "what in creation" sent her into such fits of laughter.

"Oh, Juliet, how lovely!" she said. "I only

wish the old General, Charles's father, could hear you. First he'd have seventy fits, and then he'd adore you and make you say it again every five minutes."

"Waal—whatever's the matter, then? Did he bust up after the boom?"

"No. He never burst up, for he never boomed—not this Beauchamp. You see, Juliet, the General belongs to quite another sort of family. They spell their name quite differently to the 'Pills' people, and they'd as soon think of making money by selling pills as of keeping a grocer's shop."

(Jule winced. Her grandfather owed everything to a successful grocery store, and a good brain at the back of it.)

"No, alas!" went on Alice. "My poor Charles has only a family living, worth at the most £400 a year, to look forward to for life."

"How many dollars does that come to? Let me figure it out," said Jule. "Four hundred pounds—twenty hundred dollars that is. And their old family what-you-call-it can't boom up any?"

"No, it can only cave in and grow less," laughed Alice. "That's a way Livings have!"

"That's a handsome outlook. A 'Dying' 'ud be the more suitable name, strikes me. Poppa and Momma'd just raise Cain if I concluded to fix myself that way! Guess I'd never want to start along that track," added Jule reflectively.

"Ah, Juliet, you wait till you're in love!" I said, while Alice Lechmere looked at her in gentle amazement, and made a mental note that in the American woman's make-up the heart is an organ omitted altogether.

"In love! Land's sakes! I've been in love times out of number," cried Jule. "But I'd despise myself if I couldn't manage to keep a level head when it came to fixing up a marriage. Waal—I guess I'd better be showin' you my Beauty Book; you'll find some vurry interesting pictures here. The captain and doctor of the *Teutonic* were just tickled to death with this book!"

Alice's acquaintance with the drama and its celebrities went very little beyond the Lyceum and Haymarket. Jule's Beauty Book and run-

ning commentary as she turned the pages fairly took away her breath. But Jule sailed on unconcernedly, giving the romances, tragedies, and scandals that connected this and that hero and heroine with the air of one to whom these things mean everyday life.

"Ain't you just crazy 'bout Harry Repton?" she asked.

"Crazy! Well, no," Alice laughed; "I don't think I ever heard of him."

"Do tell! Never heard of Harry Repton! Why, he's the fellow there was all that row about with Mrs. Vander Snaggen. You remember?" She turned to me, finding, I suppose, something in my face more responsive than the blank wall expression with which Alice Lechmere confronted this recital. "After the divorce and all, he went and married that French danseuse. Pretty low down, eh? All the same he doesn't look like a skunk, does he? My, what eyes! thrill you, they do! And such a voice! Perfectly divine, I call it! To think he's singing perhaps this vurry minute at the 'Folly' in London! I'm just dying to

hear him again. Pearl Sparling (she's my best friend, you know !) allows that's why I concluded to take this trip to Europe !"

Jule and her Saratogas departed at the end of a week. She was good enough to say she had had a "lovely time," but I am afraid, notwithstanding all my efforts, the poor child was dismally disappointed in us. Peter didn't play up at all, and I was *not* in the real Marlboro' House set, not even asked to the Garden Parties ; while as to "that Mr. Beechum," Jule confided to me, "you'd get more response out of one of those straight stone saints fixed up outside the church !" Still Jule left with many expressions of regret, and promised, even before I asked her, to come and pay us another visit later.

Mrs. Staggs accompanied her to the station, I being unable to go. That lady returned with considerably ruffled plumes. "Well," she informed me, "hall I can say is, I never in my born days see a young lady more in need of a strict boardin' school—never !"

Peter asked if she were in time.

"Time, sir!" snorted Mrs. Staggs. "She didn't trouble 'er 'ead about no time! You'd 'ave thought she was the Queen of hall England—porters and guards and trains come into the world on purpose for 'er ladyship. A nice fright she give me too! Off she went when we got to the station, leaving me with them boxes of 'ers and 'er bags! I never set eyes on such an 'eap of luggage—my niece 'adn't more when she moved 'er business. 'Igh and low, low and 'igh did I 'unt. At last I found my lady cool as a cucumber readin' at the bookstall. I looked to see whatever she'd got 'old of—will you believe me, sir, it was 'Advice to Them about to Marry.' 'Come, miss,' I sez, my temper a bit hup at last, 'it 'ull be plenty of time for you to read that book when you leave boardin' school. What do you want done,' I sez, 'with these 'eaps of luggage, if you please?' 'Oh my,' she turns round, 'ain't you checked them? Here, take my purse,' she sez, 'and check them right away.' 'I don't know what you

mean, miss,' I sez, 'and I've no time to waste nor 'aven't you. Your train's signalled and you've got to see your luggage labelled.' 'Well, don't get rattled, old lady,' she sez, off'andish as could be, 'let the train come right along, and you can go and 'old it while I finish this chapter.' She did, sir, indeed—that's word for word what she said—'old the train,' she said. 'I'm not accustomed to be spoke to like that by young ladies of your age, miss,' I told 'er, 'nor any hother age either!' Then she see she'd gone too far, and we just got them boxes she calls by that 'eathenish name into the train in time. She got into a carriage alone with two young gentlemen. Indeed 'm I couldn't stop 'er, and I see 'er talkin' to them bold as brass as the train went off!"

By way of smoothing down the ruffled plumes of Mrs. Staggs, I explained that young people in America are brought up to be more independent and self-reliant than in this country,—“but it makes them too precocious, no doubt,” I conceded.

"Well, miss, I don't 'old with foreign systems," maintained Mrs. Staggs, "be they for better or be they for worse. The longer I live the louder I sez it—hold England for me." And with a sigh of profound thankfulness doubtless for having chosen so well in her own pre-natal days, Mrs. Staggs closed the interview.

Juliet promised to write and say how she got on at the Anthill, but this she never did, and no news of her reached us except a perfunctory little note of thanks written the day after her arrival, till Maimie Topliffe sent the enclosed about six weeks later, saying it was a document just forwarded to her by Mrs. Brinker, and which she thought might interest us, and call forth our sympathy for Jule.

"THE ANTHILL, SLOUGH (OF DESPOND).

"Oh, my one and only Mama.<sup>1</sup> If you could see me now it would just about break your heart and Papa's<sup>2</sup> too! I'm in a red-hot hole this time and no mistake. I've

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced *Mamma*.

<sup>2</sup> Pronounced *Pappa*.



gotten caught like a badger in a trap. Listen and keep calm, my dearest, while your poor distracted Jule endeavours to make you realise the situation. Oh, those dear lovely people at the Green! To think I was with them not two weeks ago! Perhaps you'll conclude from my last letter I wasn't having a wildly exciting time at that peaceful retreat. Mama darling, I think of it now like a banished soul gazing back into Paradise. I had gotten used to their terrible English accent which drove me crazy at first. I arrived at this (insert here the fourth letter of the alphabet—I daren't write it, you never know who'll be dropping on you next or where they'll drop from!) ten days ago. Well, I was taken into a long bare room like an empty store and fed with a kind of prison fare—plenty of it, but no refinements or luxuries to tempt your appetite. All the other girls were through, so there I sat with a teacher in spectacles, and ragged-looking bangs on a forehead high as a factory chimney, looking on. I wasn't going to show I was any way rattled

by her, so I asked her friendly as I could speak if she was satisfied with her position and having a good time generally. Blest if she didn't turn round red as a tomato and fire a long rigmarole in French at me. 'Guess that won't carry you far! You don't come over me with that old British accent,' I said, laughing as good tempered as a nigger baby. 'It is forbidden to speak any language but French on penalty of a fine, except on Sundays,' she snaps out, this time in English, 'and it's forbidden to speak impertinently to any teacher in any language and at all times!' That was the first ugly jar I got, but it wasn't the last, you bet.

"Can you see me, your Jule, jabbering that crazy French tongue right away—all the time? Me that knows as much native French as an Iroquois Indian! I don't care a continental darn for their blooming punishments and fines, but whatever's the good of me talking English at a set of chattering apes who everlastingly answer you in French? Well—next thing was, me and Miss Spikey went upstairs to the

parlour (they have their parlours upstairs in this country!) to see Miss Tufnell. 'Tuffy' the 'ants' call her. There are fifty little bugs in this outfit. They don't like me calling them bugs—say it's a word not in use in society. My! you'd never credit how they go on! 'mustn't say this, mustn't do that,' till you can't tell any which side up you are. Well, to resume—Tuffy is a stiff starch school marm, figure flat as a plate both sides, you can't tell whether she's coming or going! No mischief in her, but just about as much sympathy and human magnetism as an electro-plated locomotive. Still I wasn't going to despair of fixing her on my side till I'd had a try. So I just went right along and sat down on the couch near her. She was sitting bolt up by herself knitting—the others keeping right away as if she'd gotten an infectious complaint. Would you credit that's how she elects to sit! and she answered my remarks stand-offish as you please, just for presuming to sit alongside of her 'Tuff' majesty. The girls let on to this after. We did not stay long. At nine sharp

a bell rings and down you troop for prayer-meeting. Tuffy is just terribly stuck on religion, at least she likes a sight of it for the bugs. I notice she doesn't always attend the Chapel meetings herself—one of the teachers mostly bosses the show. Tuffy's mighty stuck on a minister who lives in these parts. He comes here most every day! Some of the girls claim he's a red-hot saint—and I don't say he's not, in his way. They say they've gotten religion through hearing him, and they confess their sins to him all the time. But I don't hold with him myself. You can't keep that up I say—too much excitement in it, like our nigger revivals at home—then you cool down and are worse off than if you'd never warmed up.

"However Gladys and Irene Tappin could have put up with such a mighty lot of religion I can't think! You're never through with it week-days and Sundays alike—the kneeling makes me right down sick at my stomach—I thought yesterday I should faint, but when I told old 'Spikey,' she just said it was undigested

food—the old grump! but that's the kind of sympathy you get in sickness.

"Then my Saratogas—'Oh, you can't have more than one trunk upstairs,' says the house-keeper, 'no young lady is allowed more than one chest of drawers for her clothes.' 'Wherever am I going to locate my three Saratogas?' I ask. 'They must go in the attic,' says she.

"I felt so discouraged I could have cried at the thought of my lovely gowns wasting away in that old attic place, but this together with other circumstances all of an unpleasant character concluded me to quit right away soon as I can fix it. Not but what some of the girls are agreeable enough, and I'd be glad to be well acquainted with them and visit at their homes. But this crazy notion of speaking French prevents you ever getting properly acquainted. I've heard of a school in Paris will just suit me. A man I met on the train coming here let on all about it, and I noted down particulars. His cousin is there—it's real high-toned and terribly select. You prepare for going into society and don't worry over studying anything

you don't fancy. I am going to check my three large Saratogas there to-morrow ; it's a half holiday, so I can manage it. I've written giving references and particulars about myself to the old Madame, so all you've got to do is just cable the following two messages directly you receive this from me. Oh, Mama darling, don't wait to draw in another breath but cable quick—greased lightning won't be quick enough for me, your panting, gasping Jule.

"Cable to me—'Meet Auntie Paris to-morrow.' With this to show I can fix it fair and square with 'Tuffy.' To Madame Michelet, Neuilly, Paris, cable she's to expect me the same day or the next.

"I'll go straight away and look up Gladys and Mrs. Tappin. Pearl Sparling sent me their address in Paris, and I'm writing them this mail. Mrs. Tappin will stand finely for 'Auntie' when I show the cable round. Oh, my darling Mama, I'm counting every minute till I get that blessed heavenly cable. I reckon you'll get this by the 15th, so I shall be ready to make a start for Paris on the 16th or 17th at latest.

"Tell Pearl Sparling I haven't had even so much a sight of the dear darling Prince of Wales, now alas the King, and quite a changed character so they do say, quitted his bright youthful manner and taken on such a mighty lot of royalty it scares you! but just wait till I'm through with Paris, and if I don't take his scalp yet my name is not Jule Brinker, nor my flag the Stars and Stripes. Tell Frank Peachen and Harry Chadwick they'll have to run over to Paris when they want to see me. I'll write them when I'm good and ready. You're not allowed to write here more than once a month to friends, and once a week to your home. Handsome regulation that—eh? Dear knows how I'll ever live through these next ten days.

"My soul cries out for Paris every minute of the time. A thousand loves to my darling Papa, Hamilton, and your darlingest self.

"From your suffering, tortured, groaning palpitating gasping devoted lamb, JULE."

. . . . .

Maimie added that on the 16th inst. the cables Juliet had dictated had been duly sent

off from Cleveland, signed by the obedient parent. The pleasure of Juliet's journey to Paris, however, had been somewhat marred by the compulsory society of "Spikey," who, Miss Tuffnell had insisted, should deliver her safely into the hands of her *pro tem.* auntie !



## XI

### SPORTIE: A PATRIOT

SPORTIE is an American, and no son of the Stars and Stripes could be prouder of the fact.

Other American boys may have since repeated and adopted the speech, and there is some evidence that lesser souls have done so, but I have it from his own mother that it was Sportie who, at the age of five, when asked by his Sunday school teacher to name the first man, answered unwaveringly, "George Washington."

"Waal! And how about Adam?" inquired the teacher.

"Oh, I wasn't counting foreigners," replied Sportie with a fine scorn.

I have known him since he was three years old, and have painted him, sometimes much to his annoyance I fear, in every imaginable

costume and character and with every variety of background. In petticoats, in knickerbockers, in a very short little nightshirt for the sake of his sweet-dimpled knees, in a Scotch kilt, in a sailor suit, in a smock frock with garden surroundings, and by the seaside with just nothing at all on except the waves which kiss his wee pink toes—"as God made him and intended he should be," says his mother; but Sportie never agreed with her on this point even at three years old.

Sportie's mother has a book, a priceless book, which chronicles his history from the day he opened his big grey wondering eyes on the world.

Long before he arrived at speech he made known with extraordinary clearness his wishes and opinions. He had a complete language with his expressive little hands and feet, and a still more subtle one with his speaking eyes.

"Sportie had a sweet dream last night. He played with some wee angels in a meadow of hay, and they had a lovely time. He woke crowing with laughter, and told me all about

it. He is the sweetest thing on earth. He is four months old to-day, and he has not cried for three months," chronicles the book.

Then we have the first appearance of Sportie's first tooth ; a drawing of the sunny flaxen curl on his forehead, another of his first leather shoes—they were bronze with a strap and buttons, and Sportie was as proud of them as an Eton boy of his first shooting boots.

Whenever I visit Sportie's mother, or she visits me, we have out that book, and I read up the chronicle and add some drawings up to date. Sportie's first word—his first tune—his first ride—his first book. Later on follow his wise, witty, and wonderful sayings, a really remarkable record. From the age of four to seven to my regret I saw nothing of Sportie except from his mother's letters. I knew he was just growing, not changing as some boys do, but unfolding his petals one by one, and revealing more and more of that same rare sweet nature which had looked out of his baby eyes.

When we met again in New York, Sportie

was a fine manly school-boy, attending, as he told me with pride, "the most way-up day-school in Noo York," and he had developed into one of the stanchest patriots I ever met.

Sportie's parents live in New York, on Madison Avenue. A fine city, a fine street, and a fine house, but Sportie has far too big a soul in his well-knit little body to be proud of things like that. He is proud of being a free-born American citizen, of the grand American Constitution. He is proud of the Stars and Stripes, that legacy to his country of a great good man who in his mind stands ever first, in spite of the foreigner "Adam." He is proud, very proud, of those pioneer Pilgrim Fathers and their hard-won victory over all obstacles that opposed them. Proud, too, beyond words to express it, unless set to thrilling martial music, is Sportie of the gallant War of Independence, when the sons of Freedom, rallying round that "first man," threw off once and for ever the intolerable British yoke. Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Adams, are names engraved on his youthful imagination in letters of shining gold.

As Sportie had no brothers or sisters he was sent to school early in order to give him youthful companionship, and needless to say his favourite study at once became history. Long before he ever met them he felt terribly sorry for boys not born Americans. It was "tough luck," said Sportie.

Outside his school Sportie has two great friends. One a druggist on 42nd Street, the other a millionaire on 5th Avenue.

The bond between Sportie and his druggist friend is science; between the boy and the millionaire, chain-armour, in the first instance at least. The latter friendship has been an outcome of the former, and in a rather characteristic manner.

Sportie finding the druggist in sore straits one day owing to the sudden desertion of his errand-boy, offered to devote his half-holiday to the service of his friend, and then and there, armed with the drugs and lotions requiring immediate delivery, set out on his rounds. As the massive doors of the millionaire's mansion were opened in answer to

his ring, Sportie caught a glimpse in the hall of shining suits of armour. Now knights' armour is to Sportie what the scent of a fox is to a hound. His feet moved forward instinctively, irresistibly, as he took out the bottle and delivered it with careful injunctions to the servant.

At that moment a spare, keen-eyed old gentleman crossed the hall, and something in the clear, well-bred little voice made him pause, look at the boy sharply, and then ask what his business might be. Sportie answered he had brought the medicine from the chemist, and trusted that it would prove a fine and effectual remedy. "It ought to," he added, "for Mr. Bowles is about the brightest druggist ever ran a store!" Then before the old gentleman could answer more than a whimsical "Is that so?" this surprising errand-boy remarked, "I see, sir, that you have some *vurry* fine old armour there; would you have any objection to my examining it a moment?"

"So you are interested in armour as well as drugs?" observed the old gentleman as

Sportie walked round the figures lost in speechless admiration.

"Why, yes, that I am, sir, and I guess you've gotten some vurry rare specimens of genuine ancient armour here—knights' armour!" he added, in a tone of deep reverence.

The butler, an Irishman, was eyeing the chemist's boy with a grin which stretched his mouth, nose and eyes, right across his face.

"Where do you go to school, 'my little man?" inquired the old gentleman.

Sportie told him, adding proudly that in his opinion it was about the most way-up school in Noo York.

"And where do you happen to live, sonny?"

"On Madison Avenue," Sportie answered simply.

"Bless me—that's curious!" murmured the old gentleman. "And is it to please your father you work for Mr. Bowles?" he inquired.

"Why, no, sir! Guess it's just to please myself," laughed Sportie. "Mr. Bowles, see, is a vurry particular friend of mine. His boy's sick to-day, or says he is, and has quit. I

happened to look in about some bisulphide of carbon for an experiment just as Mr. Bowles was crazy to get these bottles off, so naturally I offered to take them round right away."

"Well, you're just about the right sort of friend, strikes me. I'm rather badly in need of one of your kind myself. Will you take me on as another of your friends?" asked the millionaire.

"Why, certainly, sir. I think we'd have a good many tastes in common." Sportie glanced round the wall. "That is, if you don't mind a friend who is only a kid," he added, a little doubtfully.

"I prefer kids," was the decisive answer ; "so there'll be no difficulty on that score."

And there was not. The friendship was riveted by a *titic-a-ttic* dinner the following day, when Sportie discovered, to his delight, several other tastes besides that of chain-armour which he and the rather solitary millionaire possessed in common, notably chess.

Their first game made his friend sit up quite straight in his arm-chair.



The millionaire had remarked that he found nothing like chess for diverting the mind from strain and anxiety. Sportie heartily agreed. "When I have trouble and anxiety in my home or my school life, I just cām myself down with chess. Guess you can't worry about anything when your king's in check, not even you now, can you, sir?"

The great financier looked at the small boy, and with prophetic eyes saw a son of whom America would assuredly one day be justly proud. And if he felt this before the encounter on the chess-board, much more was he convinced of it after. This boy of nine short summers made him look to his chain-armour in the fight, keeping him on the alert for an hour or more when he had thought to amuse himself with a little tilt of ten minutes.

"It was that Ruy Lopez opening helped me some," Sportie explained apologetically. "But you, sir, are the finest player I ever struck." They parted with a feeling of warm admiration on both sides, and a promise from the old gentleman that he would make a first-class player

of Sportie if he liked to learn. "Just give me the chance, sir. See if I won't. Why, it's one of the things I've been praying for this long time."

"What are the other things?" asked his friend.

"Well—one's a motor car, and the other"—Sportie hesitated just perceptibly—"the other is a fine, sweet, lovely girl to be my wife—just like my mother! Only," he added, "I shan't want her till I'm through with Harvard."

"Heaven forbid you should get either of them, sonny, till you're through with Harvard," said his friend, who believed neither in women nor motors—that is, he believed the same thing about both.

"If I haven't the luck to strike a girl just like my mother, I shan't marry at all," declared Sportie. "I can see you don't think much of women, sir, and I don't myself, not as a rule. See the way they make men slave for them all the time. Why, nine-tenths of the work done in the world is done for women, my father says, yet the women ain't grateful—

not a bit, they only want more and more, just to travel around and dress and amuse themselves, while the men grind away and pile up the dollars for them."

Sportie says the old gentleman laughed so much he went pretty near choking. "Guess it's just what he thought too, mother," reflected Sportie.

"Well," said his mother, "he must have thought you had a bad example in your own home, my son!"

"Oh no," Sportie hastened to assure her. "I told him I got it from books, and papers, and things I've heard my father say about women!"

The old gentleman inquired of Sportie if he had ever been in love.

"Not yet," he answered; "I reckon I'm a bit too young. But I guess I'll be falling in love when I'm older, for women can make you if they set their minds to it—they're terribly cute that way. But you can get over being in love," he added hopefully, "Fenton Ripley got over it, and he was terribly bad

for a month and more. Fenton Ripley is three off head of the school, and as bright as he can be, but that didn't help him any. He used to go and look at her picture in the store window on his way to school, and failed to be on time four days in one week. It brought him a licking at last, so he concluded to cross the street when he came near that store. I felt that way myself last fall," continued Sportie, "about a rook-rifle, and I just had to shut my eyes and get a move on whenever that store came in sight."

It was a real blank in the lives of his two friends when Sportie came over to Europe this year. His mother had been ill, and was ordered to drink German waters and bathe in German baths. Sportie went to take care of her, a responsibility he saw to it was not one in name only. He was her guardian, financier, chaperon, and courier.

The French maid shrugged her shoulders and soon left everything to "Monsieur Sporr-tee."

Of course they were obliged to stop in Paris

*en route* for Schlangenbad, and of course the tailors and dressmakers and *corsetières* could not finish any of the orders till three weeks after they were promised.

Sportie would have tired of the hotel life had it not been for Peter, who happened to be in Paris at the time routing out old MSS. and ancient archives, under the auspices of his friend the distinguished historian and curator of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsénal.

Sportie and his mother were at a big hotel in the Rue Rivoli, Peter at an old-fashioned inn just on the opposite bank of the Seine. Sportie had but to cross the bridge, and this he did very frequently, for Peter and he soon became fast friends, to the great comfort of Sportie's mother when the tailors and dressmakers claimed her for long, wearisome *séances*.

When she expressed a hope that Peter would not allow Sportie to bore him, he assured her, and with truth, for Peter cannot pretend, he had never been less bored by any companion in his life.

One day they had an adventure which re-

sulted in Peter undertaking to teach Sportie to swim. They had gone off to Surennes in a steamer. Peter was absorbed in a book while Sportie investigated the boiler, screw, rudder, &c., so as, if necessary, to be able to construct a steamer on the same pattern. Suddenly there was a commotion on the fore part of the deck, a vehement talkation, Sportie's voice raised high and indignant, "Arrêtez—arrêtez." Then his own name called sharp and shrill just as Peter closed his book and made up his mind to go and see what it was all about. As he neared the crowd there was a shriek—then many shrieks.

"Ah, mon dieu! He has jumped—he has drowned himself! What to do!"—"He has gone to save the child who fell from the wall there fishing. He desired the captain to stop—to make descend a boat. That one refused and the little one threw himself into the water," cried a fat lady, wringing her hands.

But before she had ceased speaking Peter tearing off his coat had pushed aside the crowd, and rushing to the other end of the steamer,

which continued imperturbably cutting its clear path onwards, he jumped overboard.

Yes! thank heaven there he was! A small black head had appeared for a moment in the distance, and after three breathless minutes the strong arm of the once champion swimmer at Oxford had Sportie fast.

By this time the steamer had slowed up and was reluctantly turning round. A passing boatman, however, with voluble vociferations and explanations, came first to the rescue.

"Have you saved the kid?" were Sportie's first words.

And then Peter had to see about saving the other boy, which was by no means an easy matter, for no one was the least keen about it except his three small companions on the wall, who still stood pointing at the river and shrieking, "Mon dieu, he has drowned himself—he has drowned himself!"

When at last the poor little fisherman was hauled out, it appeared only too true; but after some two hours' persistent hard work, Sportie, Peter, and a young French doctor had the

satisfaction of seeing him open dazed eyes to the bright June sun, and rejoin his life in the gay city which valued him considerably less than one of the small larks strung in long, doleful garlands across every poulterer's shop.

Sportie's mother listened with the fortitude of a Roman matron to the account of that afternoon's adventure, but her lips grew pale as she realised how near she had been to losing the light of her eyes. As for Sportie, his only comment was, "Guess I'll learn to swim right now, mother"—which he accordingly did, under Peter's instruction, in less than a week.

From Paris they went to Schlangenbad. Sportie had not been greatly impressed by the French. He acknowledged that Charvet's handkerchiefs and ties were pretty fine, but was inclined to share the sentiment of the Englishman who, when forced to concede superiority in the matter of boots and gloves, summed up with, "*Bong! Vous avy ly bottes et vous avy ly gants—mai *aty* ly bottes et *aty* ly gants, voilà vous êtes et qu'est-ce que vous avy?*"

Sportie's verdict on leaving Paris was, "Well,



## 274 THE RISING GENERATION

I've had a good time, but for a permanent residence I guess U.S. is good enough for me!"

But Germany and the Germans were soon to rouse a far more forceful patriotism and a far more active antagonism than he could ever feel for the gay, light-hearted children of Paris.

It began as soon as they crossed the frontier. The important railway officials, the notices posted up everywhere of "verboten" and "nicht erlaubt" were an offence to the free-born American citizen.

His first care was to learn off a few epithets and phrases in the German tongue, applicable and true no doubt, but scarcely conducive to peace and good-will.

"Say—we are not a pack of German slaves, and you ain't our jailors anyway," was one of the first sentences he got rendered into the German tongue to fire off at the aggressive official who too often makes travelling in the Fatherland an experience to be dreaded.

A youthful Prussian staying with his mother and aunt in the same hotel, began by making

condescending advances to Sportie, in order as, he told him with refreshing candour, "the English yet more better to schpeak." "I vind dat iss qvite light—soon vill I English schpeak besser ass you, vile man say dey schpeak not good English dee Amerikaner."

"How did you get on with that German boy, Sportie?" asked his mother after the *table d'hôte*.

"He's just about the freshest young one I ever struck," replied Sportie. "Wouldn't I like to have him attend our school for six months! Guess Baldwin 'ud soon fix him so his own Frau Mutter he treats worse than a nigger wouldn't know him. But I'm blest if he's going to learn English off me. When I took in his make-up I just played him with his own game and gave him back all the Dutch I could raise: 'Pots-tausend Donnerblitzen so!' 'Das ist aber ausgezeichnet vortrefflich fein,' and so on, till he got so mad I learnt a few more real fine expressions to add to my collection."

The sight of the country women, old and young, bearing heavy burdens, hewing wood

and drawing water, while their lords sat drinking beer, and developing figures broad as they were long, kept this son of chivalrous America in a ferment of indignation. More than once he rushed forward, to the unfeigned astonishment of the German Weib or Mädchen, and gave her a helping hand.

"I guess being reckoned neuter, 'das Weib' and 'das Mädchen,' has made them forget they're women, and so they've gotten used to knuckling under to the men just like dogs and mules," was Sportie's explanation of the phenomenon.

On one occasion his chivalry came near to getting him into serious trouble, but even the certain prospect of a German prison, with black bread and a big Bible as his only fare for a month, could not have held Sportie back. Walking in the street with his mother they came suddenly on a big, hulking boy of some fourteen years banging and buffeting a small girl who sobbed and cried in piteous wise. By her long plait of yellow hair her tyrant held her fast, so that any attempt at escape was only fraught

with fresh anguish. Like a dart Sportie shot from his mother's side, and with a low war-cry of concentrated wrath he leapt upon the hulking one, dealing him a certain knock-out blow under the jaw learnt from the boxer in New York to such good effect that it laid his astonished foe sprawling on the ground. Spluttering and howling, the Teuton waited for no more, but heaving himself up took to his heels. Sportie followed, teeth and fists clenched as he ground out, "Skunk! You'd best scoot—I've another ready for you. Hit a girl's about all you can manage—mean cuss!"

But the wings of fear and the long legs of the "mean cuss" enabled him to double round a corner at last, and deprived Sportie of the pleasure of another knock-out hit.

He returned quietly to his mother. As he did so a gentleman of awe-inspiring appearance, radiating law from every button, stepped up and demanded the name, age, and address of the "Junge" who had so rashly played Perseus in a strange land. When he proceeded to inquire also the birthplace of his father, and maiden

name of his mother, the latter felt the shadow of a German fortress engulfing the whole family. Sportie's perfect self-possession, however, reassured her at length, and the representative of the law presently showed an unexpectedly human side, actually permitting a grim smile to flit across his features when he and Sportie parted, as they did, with much ceremony and many bows. "It was like a traction-engine smiling," Sportie observed.

As for the poor Andromeda, she regarded her small Perseus with scarcely less terror than her bullying tormentor, and at the first appearance of the officer of the law she melted from the scene, tears, pigtail and all, before Sportie had a chance of inquiring after her injuries.

"I'm terribly glad God didn't make me a German woman, or you either, mother," remarked Sportie that same evening. "You'd never credit the mean laws they've gotten for women in this country. That tough kid next me at dinner says this Kaiser, the cad, has fixed up a law that no woman may choose her own home after her husband dies, nor order the lives

of her own children. Her husband's relations rule it all. He says women just don't reckon over here, and he seemed to glowry in it, though his own mother is one of them. I told him 'That accounts for the fine brave boys you turn out over here no doubt,' and, do you know, mother, he never saw I was laughing at him ; he just said, 'Ach ja, so ist es' gewiss.' So I just told him about that skunk this morning, and said what I thought about the Kaiser and his fine laws and how I'd like to have him come to a free land like America for a spell and get him made over. We ain't on speaking terms now," concluded Sportie.

Every day Sportie's mother saw the German prison looming larger and more distinct ahead. Her words of caution fell upon deaf ears, while in the French maid Sportie found an ever-ready sympathiser, prepared to cap with a worse one any tale of German delinquency or aggression.

Every day Sportie's vocabulary was increasing, and his anti-Teutonic sentiments becoming more pronounced. The Prussian boy had denounced him for *lèse-majesté* to the hotel

proprietor, and both he and his "Frau Mutter" had changed their places to the farthest end of the table from that of the offender.

It was with a sigh of profound relief that Sportie's mother drank her last glass of German water, and got her son safe out of the Fatherland.

Realising that if he were to have a pleasant visit to the Old Country it would be necessary to take up a less critical attitude, Sportie's mother got him to promise he would say no word against Britain or Britishers while his foot was on English soil.

How hard it would be to keep this promise Sportie only realised on making the acquaintance of the two English school-boys, Ned and Toby, at the Henley Regatta. Not that he did not like them and they him, though Sportie was several years their junior, but it was his first encounter with the battering-ram of the English school-boy's chaff, and they were restricted by no vows to respect the feelings of Brother Jonathan.

Sportie found himself suddenly made personally responsible for all the actions, foolish and

wise, not only of his Government, but of every American of sufficient note to be mentioned in a newspaper, whether politician, speculator, yachtsman, or champion boxer.

"Look here, young Sportie, what have you got to say now? Listen to this." And Toby would read out how Marcus Opp Golding had made a corner in wheat, and the consequent tribulation and disaster. Sportie, instead of searching for parallel cases of English enormity, mindful of his promise, would endeavour a special pleading, and offer ingenious explanations by way of defence. Or Ned would recount how football was played at Yale, and demand why America so shamefully travestied that noble game! Sportie, feeling himself on safer ground with baseball, would try to divert attention by trailing a herring across that track, but to Ned and Toby baseball was a mere name, and as unworthy of serious attention as the pastimes of the Red Indians.

In questions of history Sportie generally came off with flying colours in spite of his vow, for cold historical facts and statistics could



be stated without any but a silent inference, and Sportie had them all at his finger-tips, which his adversaries had not. He caught Ned reading up Benjamin Franklin, the Stamp Act, &c., and laughed gleefully when he found the Fifth Form Harrow boy had never heard of the "Biglow Papers."

"It's all pretty fine, young Jonathan," retorted Ned, "but I'd like to know how you'd feel if war was declared to-morrow between England and America, come now?"

"I should feel vurry sorry for you Britishers," answered Sportie, with such genuine conviction every one present cheered loudly for young Jonathan. "Read past history, I won't say more—and I reckon your Generals 'ull allow you're less fit now by a long shot than you were in the days of Paul Jones and Stonewall Jackson."

Another time the chaff had been taken up all round at a lunch-party, and the ten-year-old champion of America, having kept them all at bay with his weapons of imperturbable calm and good-humour, changed the current

suddenly by observing to the company, "I hope you've all noticed that I haven't said one word against you Britishers."

"Jove, he's right," said one.

And another, "Sounds mighty like he could if he would though!" And, "Fire away, Sportie, my lad, don't spare us," cried his host.

"No, sir," said Sportie quietly, "I promised I wouldn't, and I'm going to stick to it. I only wanted you all just to remark the fact."

"Right you are, Sportie, we do remark the fact, but just for the interest of the thing do you mind giving us your candid impression of this old country? Speak freely—we shan't be offended."

Thus adjured Sportie could not resist uncorking some of his hitherto carefully bottled-up sentiments.

"Well, sir, I will say I do wonder some why you Britishers don't wake up a bit and get a move on before it's too late. Look how we're taking your trade—steel trade, iron trade, shipping—America's just walking away with

the lot, and you don't seem even aware of it. Soon we'll have the steamers on your Thames, and most of your big railway lines—Land's sakes, do you want us to annex you right away?"

"We can manage our own steamers and railways, thank you, young Jonathan," struck in Ned haughtily.

"Now, don't get rattled," said Sportie, good-temperedly. "But face the facts—I ask any unprejudiced person. Just look at your train service—nearly an hour to come fifteen miles along this line. And if a race is on, all the traffic blocked at Victoria and the line is congested for hours. Then your luggage—if you had our check system you wouldn't have lost your valise yesterday, sir, now, would you?" he appealed to the host.

"True, too true, Sportie! Fire away." And Sportie continued:

"Well, then, the telephone! Fifteen calls ahead of you whether you tried Maidenhead or Richmond this morning. And your London street cars, and horses, and oh my, that anti-

quoted underground ! Guess this old country of yours does want making over—now don't you think so, sir ?”

“Would you include the Army and Navy and Houses of Parliament ?” asked his host.

“Well”—Sportie hesitated—“I guess you must be feeling pretty bad about the army just now, and it is a vurry embarrassing subject for me—I will own up candidly I'd rather not touch it.”

There was a general laugh, in which Sportie himself joined heartily. We all agreed we'd better “not touch it.”

“What are you going to be, Sportie ?” asked his host.

“Well, sir, I've not gotten good and ready with that answer yet. I have thought of being a druggist,” Sportie answered simply, “and I have thought of being a millionaire.” (He paused as he mentally reviewed for the hundredth time the rival attractions of a scientific and a business career as exemplified by his two friends at home.) “But which ever I conclude to go for,” he went on, “I'll have

no dealings with smoke or drink—no, sir, not much. I'll need a cool head and steady hand, and I guess tobacco and liquor are just a man's worst enemies."

"A chiel amang us takin' notes," observed some one, glancing round the table, where all present sat convicted of dealings with one or both these worst foes.

"You may say that of your Manhattan cocktails and corpse-revivers," retorted Ned, "but a good glass of English beer or an honest whisky and soda are often a man's best friend."

"I guess they were often the Boers' best friend 'way in South Africa!" replied Sportie laconically. And again he had the impartial company with him, though one of them warned him he was sailing pretty near the wind if he intended sticking to the good resolve he had just expressed.

On the whole, Sportie enjoyed Britain and the Britishers. There were red-letter days, such as a cricket match at Lord's with Ned and Toby, the Henley Regatta, a picnic to Runnymede and Windsor, and a day at the Tower

of London, where he had what he described as "the time of his life ;" days which left him with a feeling of pride in his kinship to the Mother Country. So that on his return to America, though his appreciation of his own beloved land was strengthened tenfold, there were occasions when he was heard to incite his own countrymen to nobler ends by holding up England, notably in matters of sport, for their (occasional) imitation, and brought upon his head in consequence the denunciation of "Anglomaniac."

His two old friends, however, found no flaw in his patriotism.

"Thought you'd be crazy to stop in England and attend that school of Eton where the dooks go," remarked Mr. Bowles.

And "How about that English accent, sonny ? Why, I'd just made good and ready to cure the defect, and I can't detect a sign ! You've lost me fifty dollars to Mr. Bowles," said the millionaire.

Sportie's answer to both was the same : "Guess U.S. is good enough for me."

## XII

### GINA OF MOSS ALLEY

**MOSS ALLEY**, in spite of its suggestively woodland name, is not an ideal spot for children.

It is about as grimy and squalid an alley as you could find in Southwark. Standing at the end, however, and looking straight up the narrow tortuous passage, you get a glimpse of old London which would delight the heart of an artist—a little gleaming strip of Thames where the big black barges and red-sailed fishing boats pass to and fro, and beyond, rising out of the blue smoky haze, the great dome of St. Paul's.

But no one in Moss Alley has time, inclination, or eyes for artistic effects. Even Mrs. Natterly, who loves flowers and green things so well she has triumphantly reared a Virginian creeper which glorifies her little Cinderella

house like a fairy godmother's wand, even she can see nothing in "that there river" but the "nuisance of them plaguey rats,"—"which do what you may you can't get rid of 'em you can't. And the imperence of the critturs! I ketch one the other day a 'gnorrin hup a bit o' bacon I jus' lay on the table, and," Mrs. Natterly shudders, "blest if 'e didn't turn roun' and sauce me with such a evil look in 'is eye I dursn't touch 'im, and 'e never budged till he'd took and finished the lars' morsel."

The rats in Hamlin couldn't have been worse. Mr. Natterly, when reproached for his inactivity in this respect, maintains that "the more you kills 'em the more you may."

But "plaguey" as the rats were, they were not the only evils in Moss Alley. The houses, huddled one against the other, were damp, draughty, and dilapidated. As they had been officially "condemned" over and over again for many years past, no repairs were ever dreamt of. But since the rents were low, a vacant house was instantly snapped up, in spite



of two out of the four rooms being little more than cupboards.

Victoria Regina was a Jubilee baby—the mug on the mantelshelf brought home from Jim's school treat had suggested the name to Mr. Blake. Mrs. Natterly, who had come in to "do for" Mrs. Blake, had remonstrated at what she called "sech 'eathenish names, and out of 'er station too." She had a right to speak, for she had, besides "doing" for Mrs. Blake out of pure neighbourly kindness without hope of reward, also supplied Mr. Blake with a little bit of "sothin 'ot" every evening. But Mr. Blake's was not a mind open to the arguments of "sweetness and light!"

"I won't 'ave no blyme christenin' at all," he replied, "without you give 'er the nyme Victoria Reeginer same as it is on that 'ere Jubilee mug—my gel's as good a lydy as any Queen, an' better, too, as we Socialists 'ull teach 'em 'fore long."

"When they takes on that way," Mrs. Natterly remarked philosophically, "'tain't a bit o' good jawin' 'em—worse 'en childern men are.

So I sez, well keep a civil tongue in yer 'ead, do, and I'll have the pore chile done the way you want."

Mrs. Natterly, notwithstanding thirty-five years in Southwark, still clung faithfully to some of the traditions of her childhood's country home; among them being a strong belief in "gittin crissened" and "gittin churchied," though being "no scholard," she was not a great one for church on other occasions.

Moss Alley itself knew nothing as a rule of either churches or chapels save on the one occasion of marriage. Victoria Regina and Jane Annie, another protégée of Mrs. Natterley's, were conspicuous as having taken the unusual step of appearing in church without bridegrooms.

Jane Annie's mother, Mrs. Hales, resented the Jubilee name. "Low kinds o' people like them Blykses, too, it's like their imperence! 'Owever Mrs. Natterly can put 'erself abaat as she does I never can myke aat, jes' to be swore at—that's all the pay she gits. 'The childern don' pick their paren's,' she sez, 'let

the pore innercens 'ave a charnst!' Well, I sez, you 'ave give this 'un a find send-off, no mistyke! Victoria Regina indeed!"

Mrs. Natterly is endowed with a large roomy heart, as every living thing young and old within reach of her, whether child, cat, or bird, are sure to find out before long to their own unspeakable comfort.

You may know Mrs. Natterly's door from the rest of the long row, not only by the Virginian creeper which in reward for ten years' loving care and coaxing has mounted to the bedroom window, but also by the children and cats who crowd around her doorstep.

Mr. Natterly bears it with resignation and philosophy. "My missus," he is wont to say, "gits himposed on right and lef—that 'ere cat himposes on 'er—them sparrers himposes on 'er—not to say nuthin' of ivery blessed kid in this 'ere alley—'er 'eart's that over and above soft for strangers."

Mr. Natterly has never had to complain of her conduct towards himself manifesting

overmuch softness or weakness. Where he is concerned she is like a bracing tonic, a vigorous breeze. "Father" has never from the start been allowed to get into bad habits by wasting his time and the family funds at public-houses, races, beanfeasts, or such like. There Mrs. Natterly is as firm as a rock. In their early days of married life she had put it clearly: "You cum straight 'ome, father, and there'll be a good dinner and a good supper for yer, an' a comfor'ble fire, but you take and go to them low places with the rest of 'em, and I go straight 'ome to my pore mother and leave yer to manige with the childern."

"Father" soon learnt to choose the wiser part.

Victoria Regina justified her name, though it degenerated into "Gina" on the arrival of a small red brother a year later.

She was a baby of singular strength of character and cheerfulness of spirit. Her fragile little frame surmounted obstacles that proved too much for many of her robuster comrades, over whom she ruled with gentle though de-

terminated sway. But the battle went hard with her in the early days before her small legs had learnt to crawl to Mrs. Natterly's friendly door.

How she would have fared is doubtful, but for her faithful friend and comrade Thomas. From the first he constituted himself Lord-in-Waiting and Gentleman of the Bedchamber to Victoria Regina. To his watchfulness and unfailing sympathy she owed, if not life itself, all her pleasure and comfort in it. Though poor in this world's goods, possessing in fact nothing he could call his own, save a rather shady fur coat, what he had was ever at the service of his mistress. Many a time did Thomas lay his old fur coat against the half-clad baby, till warmth came slowly back to the little shivering limbs. If he strayed as far as the door to have a look down the alley, it was always with one green eye on the rickety cradle. And at the first faint cry he was back at her side, though the welcome step of the meat-man bearing his farthing dinner on the end of a stick might be heard approaching, and hated

rivals he knew would be first in the field. Leaning over the cradle Thomas would say in his purring, reassuring voice: "Here I am—you are not alone, my queen—don't cry!"

A language so straight from the heart reaches the heart, and the baby understood Thomas long before she learnt her mother's tongue.

The "clouds of glory" trailed through Moss Alley by its frequent new-comers lost their radiance, in most cases, sadly soon. Victoria Regina, however, by some unaccountable method, kept hers round her like a halo, and grew and flourished as will some small star-like flower between the grey stones of a prison wall.

Mrs. Blake was the result of her education and environment. The real woman, crushed out of sight, out of reach at present, had never possessed the force to rise up and show herself. She was buried under the weight of poverty, dirt, ignorance, sickness, blows, and drink. Mrs. Blake's tongue worked incessantly, but without conscious effort or intention, reeling off like a phonograph the same set of lamenta-

tions, abuses, and curses day after day, year after year.

Her hands worked in the same mechanical way, dealing out food and slaps alternately, making spasmodic clutches at whatever presented itself in the day's toil, whether a saucepan, a teacup, or a child's head, with blind indiscrimination. She was always in a muddle and going to clean up to-morrow. There was always a baby on the floor and another "coming." What wonder that occasionally she took "a drop o' suthing" to "'earten" herself up!

"'E does it 'cus 'e's aat o' work—ain't got nuthin' else to do! Let 'im 'ave a turn at this 'ere slyve's life! Let 'im carry 'leven bybies! See wot 'e'll want to tyke then!"

Mrs. Natterly felt Mrs. Blake had a strong case, but her motherly heart bled for the ill-used, neglected children. "A mother's got to set her children 'fore 'erself, no matter wot 'er 'usband do—not but what I know you've a deal to put up with," she added kindly.

"I'll thank you, Miss' Natterly, not to cum

'ere miscallin' my 'usban'. 'E's a blymed sight better'n some in this plyce 'as 'olds their 'eads so 'igh."

Mrs. Blake never allowed reflections on Mr. Blake from any one but herself.

Mr. Blake in his home circle was a man of few words, mostly strong ones, and ready blows. Blows dealt not so much from *malice prepense* as from an uncontrollable desire to strike out, engendered by alcohol.

He was a big, heavy man, of powerful build, whose only safeguard against mischief would have been hard work and exercise for his muscular limbs. Unluckily his trade was that of a printer, and the only outlet for physical energy was a fight at the "pub" or smashing his wife's head. Had his lines been cast in other waters he would doubtless have been captain of his county's cricket and football club and considered a jolly good fellow. It was the consciousness of this fact that had made of him what Mrs. Natterly, with innocent irony, called a "Sociablist."



At the "Bull and Horns" he had quite a reputation as an orator. His finest speeches on the "Rights of Man" were delivered as a rule after the third glass—after the ninth he became incoherent and liable to break something.

At the time of Gina's christening he was responsible for the advent of nine little Blakes to this vale of woe. Six living, "three buried, thank the Lord," to quote Mrs. Natterly. He never could remember which of them had been "took" and which remained; but this was not surprising, as there was generally a stampede among the elder ones when "father cum 'ome," and those at the crawling stage on the floor were so begrimed they might have been anybody's.

Victoria Regina alone was an exception in this respect. From the first her face was curiously white and clean for a Moss Alley baby. In early days this was chiefly owing to the kind offices of Thomas, who took an evident pride in licking his little friend's face till it was as spotless and clean as his own.

Later on Gina managed her own ablutions in some unaccountable way.

It is not surprising that Gina's idea of a father was of a dangerous locomotive, liable to explode at any moment. According to her experience "fathers" always walked crooked, and kicked or hit out if you got in the way. As you never could tell which way they were coming, it was safest to "scoot." There were times, however, when this perilous engine seemed harmless as a furniture van, you could even climb on its knee with impunity, and coax halfpennies out of its manifold pockets. But, alas, this was not often!

. . . . .

Gina's life, however, had its bright side. Some people glancing down Moss Alley and seeing the ragged dirty children swarming on the doorsteps, and hearing the angry voices and shrill baby cries, might have concluded it was all shadow. But poverty, hunger, cold, and dirt are not the children's worst foes. All the small Blakes were used to such things, and had it not been for the ugly, violent tempers

300 THE RISING GENERATION

of both parents, and the continual dread of 'idings and "strappin's," Gina would have been as happy as the irrepressible little brown sparrows "Natt'ly" fed every day. She did not go to school even when she reached the eligible age of four years. Her mother found her useful at home. It was Gina who "washed up," "ran 'errins," "minded the biby," and kept an eye on Billy and the house when Mrs. Blake went out charing.

Minding the baby was no hardship, though he was heavy on her arm sometimes. But he was always good with Gina, and so was Billy, a tough three-year-old, whom few could beat at hard swearing if once he got fairly started.

"Drop them swear-words, you bad lad. You won' never go t' eavin!" his sister would threaten. And Billy would promise to moderate his language on condition Gina took him "t' eavin 'morra mornin'."

"Natt'ly" had a lovely picture of an angel, with large white wings and tall lilies in her hand, and once she had told Gina, "If you're

a good little gel, one day Jesus 'ull come and take you t' eaven up in the sky, and then you'll be jus' like that ere hangil!"

Gina used to think about "'eavin and hangils" as she lay at the foot of Rose and Polly's little bed, but she never spoke of them to anybody except Thomas and the baby, only very occasionally throwing out hints of "'eavin" to Billy as a bribe.

That Gina herself should one day resemble that lovely "lydy" with the white wings and flowers, seemed almost incredible, but as "Natt'ly" had said so, Gina knew it must be true. It was like Natt'ly's brown balls, which Gina had thought were "bits o' dirt," and which with her own eyes she had seen sprout out green things, and grow and grow in the glass jar till they turned into "the bew'fist flars—a pink un a bleu un—ever you seed!"

The greatest day in Gina's life was one June morning, when Mr. Hales said he "didn't mind if he took her along of Jyne Annie to ride in his big waggon."

Jyne Annie had been before "ever sech a lot o' times"—"two times" at least! But Jyne Annie was not a communicative person, or one ever to be surprised into wonder and enthusiasm. All she vouchsafed was that riding in a waggon was "fine."

During the four years of her sojourn here below Gina had never been farther from Moss Alley than the New Cut or the Boro. She thought the world was a dark grey-brown colour all over. Streets, houses, sky, river, people, and their clothes—everything was of the same neutral tint except, perhaps, a point of colour here and there, like Natt'ly's flowers and the red feather in "Florrie 'Aylses' Sunday 'at"—a thing of wondrous beauty!

But on this memorable day she found that if you drive in a waggon for miles and miles, and hours and hours, you come to a world which is green. Green all over, far as you can see. And there are trees, not thin brown ones like those in Nelson Square, but trees green as green, so tall they touch the sky, so big all the folks in Moss Alley could shelter

under one of them. And scattered over this green world, thick as stars in a summer sky, are flowers. "Dysies and buttercups," Mr. Hales called them, and he was so "awful kind" as to tell Gina and Jane Annie they might get out and just pick as many as they liked. Gina felt an inward conviction that Mr. Hales had driven to heaven, but she was too shy to ask him if it were so.

It was on this same red-letter day of hers that Gina flitted across our Green; for returning home in the afternoon Mr. Hales took a different road, and just as he was driving past our door he pulled up suddenly, to find out what was making his horse go lame.

"Oh my! See them flars, Jyne Annie! See them 'ere flars!" cried a shrill baby voice. I was just going into the house, and turned round to look at this enthusiastic admirer of the red cluster roses.

The pale, alert little face, so old and yet so young, with the big bright eyes, belonged to no country child.

"Why, I do believe it's Gina," I cried. A

shy grin of recognition lit up her face instantly. She turned to Jane Annie and nudged her. "It's ar lydy ; it is, I tell yer." For my acquaintance, beginning with Mrs. Natterly, had gradually extended to most of the inhabitants of Moss Alley. Mr. Hales, hearing we were old friends, came up and joined us.

It was the first time, he explained, that 'ere kid had ever been farther than the New Cut. "Seems strange like to 'er—heverythink does ye see, miss. She's like crazed to-dye, she is. Don't have many treats at 'ome, she don't—works a good bit 'arder than 'er father, she do—that mite of a chile."

Mr. Hales said he "couldn't wait but a minute," so Mrs. Staggs made up a basket of provisions for the long drive home, while we picked red cluster roses, and I inquired after Mrs. Natterly, and the Virginian creeper, and the three adopted cats, and Tom, the (cat) son of the house. Gina bore away a special bunch of roses and a pound of her favourite tea for her "Natt'ly," with a message that I was coming to see her soon.

Nearly six weeks passed, however, before I was able to pay that promised visit to Moss Alley.

It was on a stifling day. The four cats were seated at Mrs. Natterly's open door, looking out for their meat-man, and were distinctly annoyed at having to make way for me, but Mrs. Natterly's reception made up for their coldness.

I asked after Gina. The tears welled up in Natterly's kind old eyes.

"The little lamb's gorn 'ome. The Lord's took 'er. Thank God!" And then she told me everything there was to tell.

On returning home after her drive with the kindly giant Mr. Hales, she had trotted straight to Mrs. Natterly's door, crying out triumphantly—

"Oh, Natt'ly, I'se bin t'eaven! I'se bin t'eaven long o' Jyne Annie. It's ever so green all over 'eaven, Natt'ly! No ayngils aynt there to-dye," glancing regretfully at Natt'ly's picture, "on'y dysies and these 'ere booties. But are lydy cum and giv us these 'ere, and see wot a meny prizes I got fer you!" She held up the gifts.



Shortly after Natterly's tender heart was wrung by the sound of bitter cries from the home of her little friend. "An 'iding" had been the reception which greeted her as she ran in with her poor little buttercups and daisies, a torn frock, and radiant face.

That week the heat wave came.

The air lay heavy and stagnant in Moss Alley, and the children drooped like the flowers in the New Cut.

Then scarlet fever and diphtheria broke out, and one day a tall man in a black coat stalked down Moss Alley, and poked his nose in and out of the houses and asked many questions.

Natt'ly says that he was the "insanitary spectre," and that Mrs. Blake on encountering him on her doorstep expressed a hearty wish that the deuce might take him and his "impudence." He rejoined with several observations she did not like, and on seeing Gina crouching by the empty grate, with the baby in her arms, had remarked in peremptory tones, "That child looks to me pretty bad—you must send for the doctor at once, do you hear!"

Naturally Mrs. Blake did nothing of the kind. What she did do, however, was to box Gina's ears soundly, and tell her to "git along and not sit idlin' there."

Both nurse and baby rolled off the rickety stool, Gina striking her head against the fender, and the baby's eye coming into collision with the leg of the table.

Gina made her escape with the baby to Natt'ly, who bathed the poor bruised eye, and comforted the pale, weary little nurse.

"I do love yer, Natt'ly," said Gina earnestly. I'll buy yer a flush photer-fryme, I will—jes' like Florrie 'Aylses—an' a blue neckliss—an' a prize—an' lots o' fings, I will!"

Next morning Gina appeared again at Mrs. Natterly's door, carrying the baby in her skinny little arms. Her eyes were preternaturally bright, and her face very white and drawn.

The baby, a large bruise on his forehead, gazed about him with round, solemn eyes, aware that the occasion was an unusual one, from the fact of having on his best and cleanest "pinny."

"The biby's cum to be Natt'ly's lickle bye," said Gina, in a hoarse whisper.

"Lor', whatever's the matter with the child! Open yer mouth, my dearie, and let me look at yer throat," cried Mrs. Natterly in alarm.

But Gina had come on business, and was not to be put off.

Marching up to Mr. Natterly's own special arm-chair, she installed her precious charge in state, and then repeated with greater emphasis and difficulty: "Biby Natt'ly's ickle bye nar!"

"Bless yer little 'eart—yes, to be sure. The baby's Natt'ly's little boy, and Gina's Natt'ly's little gel! My poor blessed little hangil, now jes you let Natt'ly 'ave a look down yer throat, there's a dearie!"

What Natt'ly saw drove her rushing to Mrs. Blake.

"That child's got the dypthea or wuss," she cried; "I'm goin' for the doctor this minute, if you can't go yerself, Miss' Blake."

"Lor', wot a terdo you do myke over them brats, Miss' Natt'ly; nubbuddy'd b'lieve as you'd

'ad yer full number. Fitch the bloomin' doctor if yer like, I can't be put abaat with my soap-suds all of a lather, throats or no throats! I'll myke yer rimember, yer mischeevus limb yer!"

This last to the baby who was trying to swallow a piece of coal too big for him.

That same evening an ambulance had drawn up outside Moss Alley. A nurse stepped out and presently returned carrying a bundle in her arms.

So Victoria Regina left Moss Alley never to return.

Natt'ly had gone to see her at the hospital, and they had not refused her entreaty to be admitted, the verdict being "the poor little thing can't live."

"Seventh bed on the right," she was told. Mrs. Natterly thought she was sleeping. But presently the child opened two wide shining eyes.

"Here's a friend come to see you, dear," said the nurse. "Here's Mrs. Natterly."

With a bound the little figure started up, both

arms outstretched, her face lit with sudden joy—"My Natt'ly—my Natt'ly," she whispered, for she could not speak.

Folded to her Natt'ly's breast, Gina fell asleep at last, the little hot hand tightly clasping that of her friend.

"I'll come again to-morrer," Mrs. Natterly whispered huskily on being told by the nurse that it was time to leave.

But when she returned the following morning bringing Gina's mother with her they were taken to another room, where a tiny figure lay straight and still under a white sheet.

At sight of it Mrs. Blake broke into hysterical weeping—alternately recalling her own cruelty and the child's sweet goodness, and beseeching her "pore darlin' blessed little Gina" to come back to her.

Mrs. Natterly lifted the sheet and tenderly kissed the little marble face — unspeakably beautiful in its mysterious calm and silence.

"Lor', Miss' Natt'ly, it aynt like my Gina at all," whispered the mother, awestruck. "It's like a little queen! To think as I ever dared

to strike 'er!—Oh, Miss Natt'ly, I've bin a bad mother, whatever'll Gawd do te me!"

"Kiss the dear little hangil, Miss' Blake, and ast God to pardon you. He will fer 'er sake."

"I'll give 'er the bewtiflest funeral ever a child 'ad!" the mother sobbed in her repentance. "She shall be put awye like as if she wuz a rale queen!"

"An' so they did," Mrs. Natterly reports. "Two coaches with black feathers—and noo soots o' black for 'im an' 'er an' hall the childern—'leven poun's sick shillin' odd that 'ere fun'ral corst furs' to lars' and not tuppence to bless theirselves with—borrered every penny 'cept the two poun' fifteen drawed out o' the Buryin' Club, they did. But when I got back 'ere I just knelt down and thanked the Lord He'd taken my little lamb 'ome."



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